

The
**AGRICULTURAL
HISTORY REVIEW**



VOLUME III 1955

PART I

*

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

The Content and Sources of English Agrarian History before 1500

by R. H. HILTON

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The Untilled Field

by T. D. DAVIDSON

*

A Reconsideration of Some Former Husbandry Practices

by ERIC KERRIDGE

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**PUBLISHED BY
THE BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

The British Agricultural History Society

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The Agricultural History Review

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THE Agricultural History Review

Vol. III Part I

Edited by H. P. R. FINBERG

1955

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The British Agricultural History Society

MEMBERSHIP

The fortunes of the Society continue to flourish, but in order to make two issues of the Review a year a secure financial proposition more members are required. In this issue for the first time a complete list of the members is given. The Executive Committee very much hope that members will make a point of encouraging friends and colleagues who do not already belong to join the Society. With this in view a membership application form is being sent out with this issue. There must be many who, although interested in the history of agriculture, do not belong to the Society and even perhaps do not know of its existence. The cost of one issue of the Review is approximately £1.80. At the present time we have about 330 members; with 400 we should be in a comfortable position. A determined effort on the part of everybody to increase our membership would be a very great help. It may be of interest to point out that new members may, if they wish, purchase Volumes I and II of the Review for ten shillings and sixpence each.

THE REVIEW

It will be noticed that this issue is described as Vol. III, Part I. In the hope that the appeal in the foregoing paragraph will bear fruit, the Editorial Board is already contemplating publication of a second issue in six months' time. One suggestion that has been put forward is that we might usefully publish a list giving particulars of research in progress, so that members with kindred interests may establish contact with each other if they wish. The Board would like to do this, and will be grateful if members will co-operate by furnishing details of any research in agrarian history on which they or their friends are engaged. A postcard to Dr J. Thirsk, University College, Leicester, headed Research in Progress, giving name and address, and specifying the subject of the research, will greatly assist the compilation of a really useful list.

The Editor, who is already receiving offers of more contributions than can be accommodated in these pages, will nevertheless be glad to reserve space for letters raising queries or discussing controversial points.

STUDIES IN REGIONAL HISTORY

Another very successful one-day conference on Studies in Regional History was held jointly with the Association of Agriculture at the University of London Institute of Education on the 11th of December 1954. It was attended by about seventy people. The Chair was taken by the President, Sir James Scott Watson. The papers were as follows:

Dr Joyce Youings (University College of the South-West), 'Devonshire Monastic Lands in the Sixteenth Century'.

W. Harwood Long (Provincial Agricultural Economist, University of Leeds), 'The Development of Farming in the Yorkshire Dales'.

Dr D. C. Coleman (London School of Economics), 'Kentish Farming in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries'.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting and Conference will be held this year on 15 April at Somerville College, Oxford. Accommodation has been reserved at the College for the nights of 15 and 16 April.

SIR JAMES SCOTT WATSON

At the end of 1954 the President of the Society, Sir James Scott Watson, retired from his position as Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture and Director-General of the National Agricultural Advisory Service. Before this appointment, which he has held with great distinction for some years, he had been Professor of Agriculture at Oxford University and Agricultural Attaché at the British Embassy in Washington. It is to be hoped that he will now have time to contribute more to the published works on the history of agriculture. The Society wishes him well in his retirement.

The Content and Sources of English Agrarian History before 1500

By R. H. HILTON

THE PRESENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

THE picture we have now of medieval English agriculture and rural social conditions is the product of many investigations conducted from varying standpoints, using different sources and ranging in scope from the detailed monograph to the general treatise. This great variety may be illustrated on the one hand by James Thorold Rogers's monumental work of collection and synthesis, *A History of Agriculture and Prices* (volumes I-IV covering the medieval period) and on the other by close analytical studies of particular estates, of which an early example was Miss N. Neilson's work on the estates of Ramsey Abbey, and the latest, Mr Finberg's study of the estates of Tavistock Abbey.¹ In addition, in the form of article or larger monograph, all sorts of special aspects of medieval rural life have been explored—field systems, organization of labour, accounting systems, estate management, special products, variations in manorial structure, marketing. It might seem, from the bulk and variety of the work of historians, that our picture, if not quite finished, is at any rate firm both in outline and in the principal details; and that all we need to do now is to add a touch here and there to give extra depth and variety to an almost complete representation of the reality of the past.

It is to be hoped, however, that historians do not accept our present picture as anywhere near final, or even necessarily correct in broad outline. Without being mere image-breakers, we must still always be prepared for radical upsets to old ideas. But it is also important that historians should convey to the general reader some sense of the lack of finality about our investigations, and consequently the conception that there is always something new and exciting to find out. That is the purpose of this article.

If we consider carefully the sources on which the greater number of medieval agrarian studies are based, it will soon be apparent that for the most part they derive from the second half of the thirteenth century and the first three-quarters of the fourteenth. I say "for the most part," and hasten to add that this statement excludes Domesday Book, some very important twelfth-century estate surveys, and the charters of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman

¹ N. Neilson, *Economic Conditions on the manors of Ramsey Abbey*, Philadelphia, 1899; H. P. R. Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*, Cambridge, 1951.

periods, all of which have been used a good deal by agrarian historians. Even so, it would be difficult to deny that the centre of gravity of our medieval agrarian documentation lies very definitely somewhere between 1250 and 1350, and that the pattern of rural life which we assume to have been characteristically medieval is only certainly characteristic of the period to which I refer.

Furthermore, to this chronological limitation of our picture of medieval England we should add that the greater number of the documents of this period derive from the estates for the most part of the ecclesiastical nobility and to a lesser extent of the lay nobility. This is also the case with the estate surveys of the twelfth century. The writings of such pioneers in agrarian history as Frederic Seebohm and P. Vinogradoff,¹ in spite of their interest in and skill in interpreting Domesday Book, were much influenced by the vivid insight into the social and economic conditions of peasants which was given by the great monastic cartularies in the Public Record Office and the British Museum, some of which were in their day being published for the first time.

The earlier historians were interested in establishing sound generalizations about medieval agrarian conditions, a very necessary stage in the development of the subject. They tended therefore to give a composite picture of the village, the manor, and the estate, which, while not ignoring regional differences, tended to minimize them. In addition, their model of rural life tended to leave out factors making for change, although it would be untrue to say that they had a static conception of medieval rural life. However they did tend to present a picture of the state of affairs on the medieval manor at two or three points in time without examining at all closely the intermediate processes which made the successive pictures different. This was due to their concentration on the evidence of surveys such as Domesday Book, and the twelfth- and thirteenth-century estate surveys such as those contained in the cartularies of Ramsey or Gloucester Abbey.

An important step forward was made when in addition to the careful analysis of estate surveys and similar material, such as Vinogradoff had used for his work on villeinage, historians began to use a body of material which had already been extensively (rather than intensively) exploited by Thorold Rogers. I refer to the annual accounts submitted by manorial reeves and bailiffs to the estate auditors and to the records of manorial and other private courts which supplemented the accounts in many ways, for example in recording land transactions. This sort of evidence could be used to show the economic organization in movement, and it was very necessary if the history

¹ For example, F. Seebohm, *The English Village Community*, London, 1883; P. Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, Oxford, 1892, and *The Growth of the Manor*, London, 1905.

of demesne farming and of the rise and fall of the labour service system was to be written. But this new evidence suffered the same chronological and social limitations as the evidence of surveys. Most of the ministers' accounts and court rolls were derived from large church and secular estates and they are most abundant and informative between about 1250 and 1350.

Consequently there are still considerable gaps in our knowledge. It has been said that we know much about peasants and not enough about landlords. This however is to put the problem too crudely. We certainly know a lot about the labour services and other customary dues owed by peasants on big estates to their lords, and we certainly know too little about lesser landlords whose estate documents (if any) have not survived. But we know much less about the way in which the peasant on the big estate farmed his holding than we do about the way the demesne was organized, and we know practically nothing about the peasants whose landlords were mere knights of the shire or franklins of the village. As for the peasant who had little or no land and whose main resource was the sale of his power to work, our knowledge again is distorted. There is quite a lot of information about the estate labourer whose wages are recorded in the manorial accounts or whose duties are outlined in manorial surveys. But there is practically no obvious evidence for the condition and numbers of the men who worked for wages on the demesnes of lesser lords or on the holdings of wealthier peasants.

Hence, while we may take for granted that the big estates, their owners, and their administrative bureaucracy, would be very influential in determining the tone of rural life wherever they were established, we still need to know more about the geographical extent, social and economic structure, farming practice, and customs of areas where the big estate was not predominant. This knowledge would in turn probably lead to greater emphasis on regional variations of farming practice. For the big estates tended to create homogeneous conditions. The remarkable similarities between surveys and accounts of big estates in different parts of the country are not due only to the use of similar forms by professional surveyors and administrators but to a real similarity of conditions, often the product of a similar historical evolution dating back (in the case of monastic estates) to the tenth century and beyond.

It is only to be expected, in view of comparatively primitive conditions, that the agriculturalists of Anglo-Saxon and early Norman times should not leave many documents behind them. The machinery of the estates, like the machinery of state, together with their documentary by-products, took time to elaborate. But difficult though the reconstruction of early agrarian conditions has been, worthy attempts have been made. On the other hand, the

agrarian history of England between the rising of 1381 and the Dissolution of the Monasteries is much more obscure than it ought to be. The fact seems to be that historians have been nurtured in the manorial documentation of the great estates, and when these sources fail, as a result of the almost universal leasing of manors to farmers, they have found nothing to replace them. Consequently bibliographies of English history of the fifteenth century¹ contain little more than a sprinkling of inadequate and out-of-date material on agrarian conditions. Here, then, is one of the most formidable gaps in our knowledge of English rural life in the past.

The practical farming activities of small landowners and peasants; their relations with the market; the agricultural techniques at their disposal; their employment of labour; and the internal structure of their properties from the tenurial point of view: these are some of the problems that need to be solved in order to add to our much greater knowledge of these features on the big estates. There are other matters as well. We need to know more about crop rotations and the varying relationships between the arable and pastoral sides of medieval farming. A more theoretical analysis than is usually attempted by medievalists of profit and investment on estates of all sizes is needed. This would link up with a much needed assessment of the validity of modern concepts of economic fluctuation in the medieval economy. How profoundly did changes in the market conditions, in the price of commodities and of land, affect agricultural production? To what extent was the level of rent determined by market factors? Answers to these questions would need to be based on a study of economic conditions at national and international levels. And yet the fact that there was undoubtedly a great element of natural economy in even late medieval agriculture should make us realize the great importance of local or regional factors. Probably the most fruitful step beyond the present stage of reliance on the estate as the area of study would be to attempt to define the regional economies of the country, and on this basis to study the distribution of large, medium-sized, and small estates, the variations of social status, the growth of local markets and specialization of production, the changing relationships of social classes. These aspects of rural life are difficult to study in their inter-relationships on a national scale, at any rate until regional studies have laid the basis.²

¹ For example those in the final volume (VIII) of the *Cambridge Medieval History*, Cambridge, 1936.

² Apart from such works as H. J. Hewitt's *Medieval Cheshire*, Manchester, 1929, and G. H. Tupling's *Economic History of Rossendale*, Manchester, 1927 (only in part medieval), published studies of medieval agrarian life on a regional basis are rare. The excellent works of F. M. Stenton and D. C. Douglas mentioned below (p. 11 n. 1) are more concerned with the legal and social than with the economic aspects of rural life in the regions to which they are devoted.

SOURCES FOR THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

The study of the early agrarian history of this country depends to a considerable extent on archaeological evidence, which the present writer is not competent to discuss. It might however be mentioned that this lack of competence is perhaps a reflection of the inadequate use of archaeological methods in medieval historical research in this country. It is true that there is a solid tradition of archaeology for the period of the Anglo-Saxon settlements, and that the excavation of burial sites and to a lesser extent inhabited sites has elucidated the complex chronology of the Anglo-Saxon settlement.¹ However, apart from the study of castles, archaeology has not contributed greatly to our knowledge of later than Saxon times. Yet the agrarian historian cannot afford to ignore what the archaeologists have done. For in addition to the chronology and distribution of prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon settlements, archaeologists have something to say about agrarian technique and field systems. The examination of the material remains of the earliest inhabitants of this country shows what crops were sown, shows the development of tools such as the digging stick, the plough, the sickle, and the quern, as well as what were the principal domesticated animals living with, or eaten by, early man.

Particularly interesting to the medievalist is the investigation of field systems with the aid of air photography. Was the intermixed open-field strip agriculture of medieval England known in Roman times and before? Some pre-historians have led us to believe that there is a correlation between the square "Celtic" fields of the downs and the light plough or *aratrum* of the ancient world; and between the heavy plough or *caruca* and the supposedly Teutonic open fields. But this apparently logical connection has been disturbed by discoveries of plough remains that would by no means fit in with their associated field pattern—according to this theory. And if air photography has made us familiar with the pattern of square plots of Celtic or Romano-British date, it has also revealed the possibility of a pre-Roman strip cultivation.²

¹ The pioneer work on this subject is E. T. Leeds, *Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, Oxford, 1913. Amongst later contributions may be mentioned Professor S. W. Wooldridge's chapter in *An Historical Geography of England before 1800*, ed. H. C. Darby, Cambridge, 1936.

² A popular summary of the older view is by E. C. Curwen, *Plough and Pasture*, London, 1946. Compare O. G. S. Crawford, *Air Survey and Archaeology*, London, 1928; E. Barger, 'The Present Position of Studies in English Field Systems', *English Historical Review*, LIII, 1938, pp. 385-411; F. G. Payne, 'The Plough in Ancient Britain', *Archaeological Journal*, CIV, 1948, pp. 82-111. For later field systems, see H. L. Gray, *English Field Systems*, Cambridge (U.S.), 1915, and C. S. and C. S. Orwin, *The Open Fields*, Oxford, 1938.

But the first indisputable written evidence of common open fields with intermixed holding appears in the laws of Ine. In general the laws of the Anglo-Saxon kings are very important as evidence in agrarian history, for the simple reason that any legal system governing the conduct of an almost exclusively agrarian society is bound to deal with agricultural matters, however indirectly.¹ Amongst the most important of these laws are those of the sixth century which show the spread of the area of cultivation as a result of the efforts of colonizing nobles, and at the same time the growth already of a dependent peasantry. The evidence of place names supplements this legal evidence. Perhaps the work of linguists on place names, their period of origin, and their significance, has contributed even more than the work of archaeologists to our knowledge of the growth of early occupation.²

The later agrarian history of Anglo-Saxon England is mainly known from the land-books and other documents which testified to grants of land or of rights over land made by kings or other landowners. These are not easy to interpret and vary a good deal in amount of detail. Many of them are important rather from the point of view of constitutional history in that they show the extent to which public rights were granted to private persons. But they also often show in detail what food tributes were payable from peasant holdings to their lords; how land was distributed (references to intermixed strips are frequent in midland documents); what prices and rents were paid for land; and sometimes what labour services were owed by tenants.³ The investigation of land-books also shows the process by which the big estates were built up. The accumulation of land by Benedictine monks, for example, in the Severn valley and in eastern England, in the tenth century, was to give such regions a special imprint which lasted throughout the middle ages.

The other major source for the agrarian history of the Anglo-Saxons is the Domesday survey.⁴ Although this survey was made twenty years after the Norman Conquest, the royal commissioners had to collect information

¹ The Anglo-Saxon Laws are translated into English by F. L. Attenborough, *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, Cambridge, 1922, and by A. J. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, Cambridge, 1925.

² See the Introductory and County volumes of the English Place-Name Society.

³ A useful collection of translated landbooks, leases, and other documents is that of A. J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, Cambridge, 1939.

⁴ Printed in 'record type' and published in four vols., London, 1783-1816. The best texts for the general reader are the translations for each county in appropriate volumes of the *Victoria History of the Counties of England*. A. Ballard's *The Domesday Inquest*, London, 1906, is a good popular survey, but the most outstanding, though more difficult, work on it is by F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, Cambridge, 1897.

going back to the period of conquest itself. Furthermore much of the social structure of late Anglo-Saxon England must have survived even the political upheavals of William I's reign, so that, as F. W. Maitland pointed out so effectively, Domesday Book is as much a point from which to look backward as one from which to scan the future. The outstanding feature of the survey is that it covers most of England, using a uniform principle of inquiry, and records indifferently facts about both large and small estates, and about great and humble landlords. William I was interested mainly in two things: the taxable capacity of the country he had taken; and the distribution of landed power. Consequently a lot of questions which an agrarian historian would have liked to put to the local jurors of 1086 were not put by the king's commissioners. Even so, to know the estimated net value of manors in 1066 and 1086; their assessment for taxation; the numbers of persons of various social grades; the number of demesne and tenant plough-teams; the number and value of mills, woods, meadows, and fisheries, is to be in possession of basic information for an understanding of the social and economic life of eleventh-century England.

Even if we admit that the Norman clerks who compiled the survey sprinkled the country with "manors" that did not exist (and we should not exaggerate either their ignorance or their lack of understanding of England), we nevertheless cannot but recognize that by now this was a highly feudalized land with a peasantry well on the way to serfdom. The land-books already suggested this, and the customs of an English estate round about A.D. 1000, known as the *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*,¹ make it clear that the majority of Domesday Book villeins and smallholders (about 70 per cent of the recorded population) owed labour services and produce rents to the landlords. On the other hand Domesday Book also shows that one manor was not necessarily like another. An analysis of the data shows that while there were manors coincident with the village, containing both lord's demesne and peasant holdings of varying size, there were also little manors, several to a village, consisting of demesne without tenants or tenants without demesne; as well as huge manorial federations enveloping several village and hamlet settlements.

THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Domesday Book looks forward as well as backwards. It is the stepping stone from which we pass to the twelfth-century estate surveys. These careful and detailed documents reflect in general the elaboration and stabilization

¹ Translated in Bland, Brown, and Tawney's *English Economic History, Select Documents*, London, 1937.

of the big estates (for the most part ecclesiastical). The detailed statement of the demesne resources and peasant rents and services which they contain, suggests that already some system of estate accounting was in existence, for a reliable survey in the hands of the administrator is the natural means of checking returns from the local possessions described in the survey. In particular each survey was occasioned by a special situation, such as the taking of the Peterborough Abbey lands into the king's hands in 1125. A number of other surveys may have been made in an attempt to take stock of the situation after the feudal anarchy of Stephen's reign, when many of them suffered serious depredations. On some estates more than one survey was taken during the century, and in these cases slight but significant changes, in the direction of the leasing out of portions of demesne and an increase in the amount of money rent, are to be observed. This tendency is but a faint reflection in England of what had been happening at a catastrophic rate on French, German, and Italian estates since as early as the tenth century.¹

Although there are no private estate accounts before the thirteenth century, the sheriff's accounts enrolled on the Pipe Rolls contain information about the crown estates in the various counties as well as about some estates temporarily in the king's hands. The earliest which survives is that of 1130, the only one for Henry I's reign. In addition to the information they contain (e.g. about the stocking of royal manors), they suggest that such a system of accounts may well have existed on private estates, some of which had exchequers, institutions which presuppose a system of account.²

But the agrarian history of this period would be much less well known than it is, were it not for the existence of large numbers of royal and private charters which attested the transfer of land. Some of these have survived in the original, the majority as copies in estate registers or cartularies. Most of these were compiled by religious landowners, although there are a few lay cartularies. The charter is, of course, useful for many different purposes connected with political and administrative rather than agrarian history. The interpretation of these documents for agrarian history is not easy, but they are nevertheless a very important source. A charter attesting, shall we say, a grant or sale of a dozen acres of land in a village, is a minute fragment

¹ Besides the Peterborough Survey, there are surveys of the Burton, Worcester, Evesham, Ramsey, Durham, Glastonbury, and Templar estates. There is an interesting discussion of this twelfth-century evidence by M. M. Postan, 'The Chronology of Labour Services', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th Series, xx, 1937, pp. 169-93. The continental developments are summarized in an article by F. L. Ganshof, *Cambridge Economic History*, 1, Cambridge, 1941.

² The Pipe Rolls are being published by the Pipe Roll Society. See A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, Oxford, 1951, Chapter II, for evidence from this source.

of the total reality of English agricultural life at the time the land was granted. But there are hundreds of these fragments, and if they are read together they often tell us much about the process of disintegration or growth of estates, as well as about agricultural practice. The land itself is often described in detail, each strip of land allotted to a named furlong in the village fields. And so it may be possible to reconstruct the village field system. Sometimes a complete holding is granted, and, in being granted, is described—not only its arable lands, but its meadow and its common rights, including the stinted right of pasture on the commons.

Professor Stenton and Professor Douglas have both shown how it is possible to reconstruct much of the agrarian structure of English regions from charter evidence, even though the practical details of farming practice still remain obscure.¹ But charter evidence is important not only when, as in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is the most abundant type of evidence available. It is also a type of evidence which reflects the agrarian economy of peasants and lesser landowners whose activities are otherwise undocumented. For although most charters are known to us from the cartularies of the great landowners, they are often evidences of title going back to times when the owner was not the powerful grantee or purchaser but the humble donor or seller.

THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

The materials for agrarian history become very abundant in the thirteenth century, and if hitherto we have been obliged to omit minor sources, we shall be obliged to do so to an even greater extent from now onwards. It has been emphasized above that the outstanding feature of our evidence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is that it is to a great extent the by-product of the activity of the baronial estate. Unlike their continental opposite numbers, the English bishops, abbots, and barons in this period had maintained more or less intact the traditional structure of their estates and still cultivated, in many of their manors, an extensive demesne farm, part of whose product they may have consumed directly, but much of which they sold on the market. Their need for a money income also expressed itself in a general increase of money rents and labour rents alike. The general tightening up of the organization of the estate brought about an elaboration of the system of financial checks and controls. This is shown in the careful auditing

¹ See F. M. Stenton, *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, London, 1920, Introduction, for a demonstration of the use of charter evidence. Also the same author's *Types of Manorial Structure in the Northern Danelaw*, Oxford, 1910, and D. C. Douglas, *The Social Structure of Medieval East Anglia*, Oxford, 1927.

of the accounts of all types of officials. It is also shown in the careful keeping of court records, for manorial justice, apart from keeping tenants in order, was a considerable source of financial profit.

The historian of the thirteenth-century estate, therefore, in addition to charters and descriptive surveys which were already available for the twelfth century, has manorial bailiffs' accounts, accounts of other officials (from General Receivers to shepherds and dairymaids), and records of manorial and central estate courts. The accounts show money income and expenditure: rents, sales of produce, money from commuted labour services, wage payments, purchase of seed, stock, and equipment, building expenses. They also often show in detail the receipts and outgoings of grain and live-stock, usually accounted for on the back of the parchment roll containing the money account. Some bailiffs even tell us in detail how much and what kind of seed was sown on each named portion of demesne, and this enables us to calculate yields when we have the next year's accounts to tell us what the harvest was. Another consequence of this more stringent estate organization was not only that a class of professional bailiffs began to appear, but that bailiffs and landlords generalized their experience and wrote treatises on estate management, the most famous being that of Walter of Henley, not superseded until Fitzherbert wrote his *Boke of Husbandry* in the sixteenth century.¹

We are often told that the records of disputes in law courts only reflect the exceptional and the pathological aspects of society. This view can hardly be accepted, especially for the middle ages, when private courts combined administrative, arbitrational, and punitive functions, and when all men were likely to be suitors by compulsion at some court or other. Hence the manor court records tell us more than most other records about the day-to-day life of the village: local breaches of the peace, peasant resistance to the performance of labour services, and the like. In addition all surrenders and re-issues of land were recorded. This tells us about official changes in the occupancy of peasant land. Since peasants usually also ran an unofficial land market among themselves and often got fined for it, the court rolls also con-

¹ The outstanding work on estate administration is N. Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration in England*, Oxford, 1937. Walter of Henley's *Husbandry* and analogous treatises are edited by E. Lamond, London, 1890. There are many good histories of individual estates, of which only a few need be mentioned: F. M. Page, *The Estates of Crowland Abbey*, Cambridge, 1934; R. A. L. Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory*, Cambridge, 1943; M. Morgan, *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec*, Oxford, 1946. A useful study of the documentary evidence for the big estate is by H. W. Saunders, *An Introduction to the Rolls of Norwich Cathedral Priory*, Norwich, 1930.

tain a reflection of this unofficial activity.¹ But other court records besides those of the manor and estate contain evidence of importance for agrarian history. The royal courts, especially those held by the justices of King's Bench and Common Pleas, contain innumerable cases of significance. Disputes about ownership and tenure are abundant, but usually not very informative as far as agricultural practice is concerned. Disputes between freemen and manorial lords about common rights, and between peasants and lords about increased rents and villein status are often much more revealing. Here again, the records of the public courts, though containing less intimate detail than those of private estates, record indifferently the litigation of social groups whose affairs would otherwise be unrecorded.²

Similarly the elaborate royal survey known as the *Rotuli Hundredorum* tells us about landowners and occupiers who otherwise would leave behind no record. The Hundred Rolls of 1274 give answers by local juries about local encroachments on royal rights and contain only scanty references to agrarian matters. But the returns of 1279 for the counties of Cambridge, Bedford, Huntingdon, Buckingham, Oxford, Warwick, and Leicester are in fact a fragment of what must have been intended as an elaborate survey of all landholders great and small, from bishops and earls to petty smallholding sub-tenants. Such as they are, these fragmentary returns give a very different picture of midland England from that which would be assumed from the study of the great estates alone. Not only does it show the estates of the smaller landowners, consisting often of demesne worked by wage labour with few, if any, dependent tenants. It also shows what a great development of sub-leases there was amongst the peasants. It suggests to us that the regular and comparatively equal holdings described in the estate surveys could not have reflected agricultural reality. Some tenants of a yardland of say twenty-five acres might have been sub-letting more than half of their official holding to other tenants, and at the same time taking on lease land which from the point of view of the manorial officials should have been occupied by some one else. In this way scattered holdings could be consolidated, poor peasants could get rid of land in order to earn their living

¹ G. C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge, (U.S.), 1942; and A. E. Levett, *Studies in Manorial History*, Oxford, 1938, especially those sections devoted to the St Albans estates, are based to a considerable extent on manor court records. See also F. W. Maitland, *Select Pleas in Manorial Courts*, London, 1889.

² Few assize rolls are published, but there are interesting extracts in the *Placitorum Abbreviatio*, London, 1811. Cf. R. H. Hilton, 'Peasant Movements in England before 1381', in *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series II, ii, 1949, pp. 117-36.

mainly by wages, and wealthy peasants could accumulate holdings which would bring them economically to the level of many a small squire.¹

The evidence of charters, royal court records, and royal enquiries is essential in order to redress the balance against the large, and for the most part ecclesiastical, estates, which have left such an abundance of private records. Here another public source should be mentioned, the *inquisitiones post mortem*. These enquiries were made into the estates of all persons holding land in chief from the crown, as questions of escheat, wardship, or marriage might arise. When detailed surveys were made, they were on the same model as private surveys: descriptions of demesne resources and peasant rents and tenures. In many cases the local juries gave information and the escheators sent in returns to Chancery and Exchequer which minimized the income and resources of the estate. Hence they are not as reliable as private surveys. But they often include surveys of the lands of quite humble tenants in chief, and thus supplement our knowledge of the holdings of smaller landlords.² As they cover all counties we may also, through them, get to know a good deal about areas where there is a dearth of estate material. They have been used, sometimes too uncritically, in order to estimate the relative progress of the commutation of labour services in different parts of the country in the fourteenth century. More reliable, however, for this purpose are the manorial accounts, which show not only the progress of permanent commutation of peasant labour services for money rent, but the fluctuating annual releases of service for money payment according to the varying labour requirements of the demesne.

THE LATE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

The commutation of peasant labour services has for a long time been the outstanding subject of discussion among agrarian historians of the later middle ages.³ It must remain one of the central issues of the agrarian history of the period. For it involved more than a change in the character of peasant

¹ For the 1274 Hundred Rolls see H. M. Cam, *Studies in the Hundred Rolls*, Oxford, 1921; and for the 1279 Hundred Rolls see E. A. Kosminsky, 'The Hundred Rolls of 1279-80 as a source for English Agrarian History', *Economic History Review*, III, 1931, pp. 16-44. E. A. Kosminsky's *Studies in English Agrarian History in the Thirteenth Century*, which contains a fuller analysis of the Hundred Rolls, will appear in an English edition this year.

² The Worcestershire Historical Society has published thirteenth- and fourteenth-century inquisitions post mortem which include surveys of the possessions of small landowners: *Worcestershire Inquisitions Post Mortem*, Oxford, 1894 and 1909.

³ See E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England*, I, London, 1937, Chapter III. This work also includes a very full bibliography. See also M. M. Postan, *art. cit.*, and A. E. Levett, *The Black Death on the Estates of the See of Winchester*, Oxford, 1916.

obligations to the landlord. It was part of the process of withdrawal by the bigger landlords from agricultural practice. It involved the relaxation of disciplinary pressure by the lords and their bailiffs over the village community. This freed forces which were already making themselves felt. Most important was the social stratification of the peasants under conditions of competitive production for the market. England, from the point of view of agricultural practice, was becoming a land of peasant occupiers of varying economic status, many of whom, whatever the legal character of their tenure, enjoyed for a time the security of proprietors. What was the consequence of this release of peasant energy, once devoted directly or indirectly to the lord and his demesne, and now, through commutation and comparatively low rents, applicable to the peasant holding? Can we now discover as much about the agricultural practice of the peasant and the demesne lessee as we know about the practice of the estate in its palmy days? Did these developments mean that large-scale planned management gave way to backward peasant methods in agriculture? Or is the conception of the progressive character of large-scale estate management in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries an illusion based on modern assumptions that the big unit is necessarily the most efficient? Did improvements in peasant farming more than make up for any loss of efficiency when the central direction of demesne farming was abandoned? Was there in fact any appreciable decline in the size of the unit of production when rich peasants and lessees assumed responsibility for the supply of the market? Finally, what were the available supplies of labour for peasant farming? If (and this is disputed by some historians)¹ there was a relative increase in the employment of wage labour, was not the productivity of this labour likely to be greater than the semi-free and servile labour used on the baronial estate?

It is because the active producers (that is, the peasants, and particularly the demesne lessees), did not for the most part keep records that we are so ignorant of agriculture in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Estate records are of course by no means useless. Bailiffs by this time are often very little more than rent-collectors and in many cases they account for a fixed rent charge which changes very little over a century. However, this is not invariably the case. Some accounts give details of rents received as well as of "Decay of Rents" (that is amounts of rent which either cannot be collected or whose loss has been accepted by the estate administration). These details may include something about the forms of tenure. Accounts also sometimes give the terms on which the lessee or lessees hold various portions of the

¹ M. M. Postan, 'Some Economic Evidence of Declining Population in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, II, iii, 1950, pp. 221-46.

demesne.¹ Other estate materials also give information about holdings, rents, and tenures. Rentals and surveys often reflect more accurately the actual agricultural holdings of fifteenth-century tenants than they did in the thirteenth century, for the simple reason that the peasant land market becomes legalized and lords of manors no longer need to insist on the integrity of the traditional holding as they did when it was responsible for a given quota of services. Such surveys show the fragmentation and reconstitution of holdings and the accumulation in fewer hands of considerable quantities of land, one rich peasant often holding by a variety of tenures, free, customary, and leasehold.² Other estate records which are still valuable for fifteenth-century agrarian history include the records of manorial courts, important especially for the registration of land transfers, and cartularies or registers which often contain details of the leases by which lessees held demesne arable, meadow, woodland, and livestock.

But if estate records continue to be important, it is in so far as one can draw inferences about the activities of the producers. They contain practically no direct evidence about agricultural practice as they did when the lord had the demesne in hand. Even the middling-sized landlords seem to have been dependent on rent rather than production for their income. The Pastons, the Stonors, and the Plumpton who have left such a lively record of their activities in their private correspondence, only very occasionally refer to farming practice.³ It is clear from the Paston correspondence that they and other East Anglian gentlemen (like Sir John Fastolf) were supplying the London and perhaps even the continental market with barley, malt, and other grains. They are constantly preoccupied with fluctuations in grain prices, just as they are equally preoccupied with the difficulties of keeping rents up. But there is little indication that they actually grew the bulk of the grain which they sold. References to "farm barley" suggest that much of it must have been produce rent from lessees. Nor was Fastolf any more active as an agriculturalist in Wiltshire on the Scrope manor of Castle Combe which he was managing.⁴ He had let out all the demesne resources and probably got most of his profits from acting as a middleman between the Castle Combe clothiers (some of whom were also servile tenants of agricultural holdings) and the London and foreign market.

¹ The value of fifteenth-century estate accounts is discussed in the introduction to *Ministers' Accounts of the Warwickshire Estates of the Duke of Clarence* by R. H. Hilton, Oxford, 1952.

² An example of a fifteenth-century survey will be found in the publications of the Thoresby Society for 1915-18 (Leeds and Rothwell). It is translated into English.

³ *The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, London, 1895; *The Stonor Letters and Papers*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, London, 1919; *The Plumpton Correspondence*, London, 1839.

⁴ G. Poulett Scrope, *Manor and Barony of Castle Combe*, London, 1852.

Legal records contain some of the best evidence about trends in agricultural production in the later middle ages. The records of courts of equitable jurisdiction, including petitions and counter-petitions of plaintiffs and defendants, have long been known as sources for fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century social history. Chancery, Star Chamber, and the Court of Requests all dealt with disputes which had an agrarian basis.¹ It is from these that we derive a lot of our knowledge about the enclosure for sheep pasture which was not only a cause of social discontent but also an important technical development in the period. Most of the evidence known relates to the later part of the fifteenth century and afterwards, but the assize rolls which record pleas in the principal courts of common law should not be ignored. These are such voluminous records that they might well daunt the investigator, but such county records as have been published suggest that enclosure disputes may have been a major feature of rural conflict at the beginning of the fifteenth century if not earlier.² It is from the Star Chamber and Court of Requests records, however, that we get most of our evidence about what we may regard as the landlords' counter-attack on the peasants, after the brief period of peasant gain in the century after 1381. I refer to the attempts to undermine the security of copyhold, that is, customary tenure.³

Of course, not all sections of the peasants fared equally well during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We know something about the rich peasant lessees but we know less about those with smaller holdings, or with none. The figures suggest that those for whom wages constituted the principal source of income lost little of the improvement they had gained after the plagues and the social discontent which culminated in the rising of 1381. Subsistence farmers working fifteen to twenty acres may have gained less than the well-off lessees, or than the workers these bigger men employed. The difficulty is that we are not sure of the relative numbers of these groups.

¹ Chancery, Star Chamber, and Court of Requests evidence has most recently been discussed by Maurice Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England*, London, 1954. See also I. S. Leadam, 'The Inquisitions of 1517', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, N.S., VI, 1892, pp. 167-314. The Selden Society has published Select Cases from Chancery, Star Chamber, and Court of Requests proceedings, and a number of local record societies have also published Star Chamber proceedings relevant to their county.

² Cases are printed by G. Farnham, *Leicestershire Medieval Village Notes* I-VI, Leicester, 1929-33, and by G. Wrottesley in *Historical Collections for Staffordshire*, vol. XVII, 1896, pp. 1-153, and New Series, vols. III, 1900, pp. 121-299; IV, 1901, pp. 93-212; VI (i), 1903, pp. 89-164.

³ Cf. I. S. Leadam, 'Security of Copyholders', *English Historical Review*, VIII, 1893, pp. 684-96, and A. Savine 'Copyhold Cases in the Early Chancery Proceedings', *ibid.* XVII, 1902, pp. 296-313, and 'English Customary Tenure', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XIX, 1905, pp. 33-80.

There would be little room for wage labour when peasants farmed comparatively equal holdings for subsistence; but with big farms producing for the market, and great inequality of holdings, the need for such labour would be considerable. The fact is that there were probably great variations from region to region and even from village to village. The Suffolk Poll Tax returns of 1381, which give the occupations of those taxed, suggest a very large number of wage workers both in agriculture and in rural industry over the whole region. Other returns, such as those from Staffordshire and Leicestershire, show considerable variation in social structure within comparatively small regions. These are the most interesting tax returns, because they designate occupations. Other returns, of which there are a fair number from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, are useful mainly because they record comparative populations of villages and the relative taxable capacity of individuals. Conclusions on both these topics have to be made with considerable reservations.¹

OTHER SOURCES

This survey of the principal sources of English medieval agrarian history has omitted many which readers may reckon to be of more importance than those considered. For instance, one could undoubtedly lay great stress, for the whole period, on literary evidence. Anglo-Saxon literature contains references to agrarian practices, social relations, food-grains, and so on. The monastic chronicles at all dates show a greater or lesser concern with the history of the monastic estate, and in some cases this far outweighs the chronicler's concern with ecclesiastical or political affairs. Middle English poetry and prose, whether touching directly on social or political matters or not, reveals, by many a direct description and many an image, facets of rural life which would not reach us through the unimaginative administrative records. One has only to think of the social criticism of the great fourteenth-century preachers,² of poets like Langland with his sharply satirical remarks about all social classes, including the rural wage labourers, employees, one imagines, of middling peasants like Piers Plowman. Then again, I have not dealt with the body of ecclesiastical evidence in its narrow sense, that which was the by-product of the church in its spiritual functions. There are many matters of agrarian interest scattered throughout the bishops' registers, such

¹ Suffolk Poll Tax returns are printed by E. Powell, *The Rising in East Anglia*, Cambridge, 1896, Leicestershire returns in G. Farnham, *op. cit.*, Staffordshire returns in *Historical Collections for Staffordshire*, xvii, 1896, pp. 155-206. See R. H. Hilton, 'Medieval Agrarian History' in *Victoria County History of Leicestershire*, II, London, 1954, p. 187.

² See G. W. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, Cambridge, 1933.

as the bishop of Worcester's excommunication of rival shepherds on top of Bredon Hill where he kept his flocks.¹ In the records of the religious houses, settlements between the appropriating house and its vicars with regard to the division of the parochial tithes often yield information about village field systems. And where we have information about total receipts of tithe grain in a parish, there we have information about the proportions of crops sown by peasants as well as by lords.

But the fact is that medieval England was so closely bound to the tilling of the soil and the grazing of flocks that one can hardly read any writing or look at any work of art of the period without coming across some evidence, great or small, of rural life. It is almost impossible to study medieval agriculture without studying the whole of medieval life.

¹ *Register of Walter Reynolds*, Worcestershire Historical Society, London, 1927, p. 40. Many local societies have published bishops' registers.

Notes and Comments

SALE OF THE BEAUMONT COLLECTION

Last November, at an auction sale held in Holborn, twenty-two Lordships of Manors in Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk were disposed of for just under £10,000. They were part of a collection begun during the last century by Joseph Beaumont, an Essex solicitor, and continued, after his death in 1889, by his son. In addition to those auctioned another twenty-six were offered for sale by private treaty.

The lots sold at an average price of £440, a figure which was to some extent accounted for by the manorial records which went with each lot. The price, indeed, might have been higher if the Master of the Rolls had not made it quite clear that he could not permit any of the records to go out of the country. This announcement, made by the auctioneers, was greeted with restrained applause from the four hundred people present.

It is doubtful if many people in the room had a very clear idea of what was for sale. Many of the titles carried with them rights, rights of common or waste, rights of turbary or minerals, and occasionally the right to let grazing. A few were in fact at the time of the

sale revenue-producing as the result of way-leave agreements with electric companies or water boards. Some of the bidders were quite clearly anxious to obtain the documents, but a high proportion were obviously bent on purchasing a title and, at that, a title which they would never use, at any rate in public. At least one purchaser was prepared to pay a very considerable sum to obtain a lordship because his brother owned one already and he was anxious not to be outdone. Another, from his questions to the auctioneer, was clearly under the impression that he had purchased an area of land.

The archivists of at least two of the counties involved in the sale made public offers to take into custody any of the records purchased and to provide the purchaser with a transcript free of charge. This was a wise step for it is most important that such manorial documents (many of the lots were extremely complete and some dated back to the fourteenth century) should find a safe resting place where they may be consulted by scholars.

It was certainly an interesting occasion and

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The Untilled Field

By T. D. DAVIDSON

AMONG the earliest records of the reformed Church of Scotland occurs the following entry. "In the district of Garioch the Kirk resolved to apply to Parliament for an Act—Anent the horrible superstition used in Garioch and diverse parts of the countrey, in not labouring ane parcell of ground dedicate to the Devill, under the name of the Goodmans Craft: The Kirk, for remedie therof, hes found meitt that ane article be formed to the Parliament, that ane act may proceid from the Estates therof, ordaining all persons, possessours of the saids lands, to cause labour the samein betuixt and ane certane day appointit therto; utherwayes, the cace of dissobediencie, the saids lands to fall in the Kings hands, to be disponit to such persons as pleases his Majestie, quho will labour the samein."¹

In many parts of Britain, but particularly in the north-eastern counties of Scotland, there were to be found pieces of ground in many farms kept apart and uncultivated. Known variously as the Goodman's Croft, Halyman's Croft, Goodman's Fauld, Gi'en Rig, Deevil's Craft, Clooties Craft, and the Black Faulie, these untilled acres were considered uncanny and none dared touch them with a spade or plough.

At Forgue, on the 3rd of March 1650, Norman Leslie and James Tuicks were delated "for having given away a fold to the goodman as they call him to make their cattle 'stand' (thrive) and confessed they went to a fauld and promised to let it lie unlaboured as long as they possessed their tacks, and in testification thereof, they did cast some stones in over the dyke of the field." The Session judged this to be a most impious and superstitious act, referred them to the Presbytery, and ordered the land to be laboured. At the meeting of the Presbytery on the 21st of March in the same year, Tuicks appeared and confessed that because the "guids were falling away they resolved once more to lay out a piece of land unlaboured, to essay if that might be a means of making their cattle thrive."²

On the 25th of November 1646 William Seifvright and George Stronath, of Glas, being "accused of sorcerie in allotting and giving over some land to the old goodman (as they call it) denyed the same; but because it was so

¹ *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland: Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland from the year MDLX*, Edinburgh, 1845, pt. 3, p. 834.

² J. M. McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the North East of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1929, p. 138.

alledgit they promised to manure said land. The brethren, taking the mater to their consideration, continowed their censure till the performance of thir promis."¹ As the result of a visitation of the Kirk of Rhynie in 1651, it was admitted by Sir William Gordon of Lesmore that a part of his *mains* or home farm was given away (as is commonly said) to the Goodman, and used not to be laboured, "but that he had a mynd, by the assistance of God, to cause labour the same."² The Presbytery of Strathbogie, in 1631, ordered land in Rothiemay dedicated to the goodman to be manured, and sixty years later in the same place, John Clark was delated for giving a piece of his land as "helly man's ley."³ A witness at the time said the reason for Clark's action was that his predecessor in the farm had thirteen head of cattle and horse that died. In the Presbytery Book of Garioch we find records of similar crofts at Oyne and Inverurie; in Oyne in 1650 there were three pieces of ground called Goodman Folds, and in 1655 notice was taken of some land in the parish of Inverurie, "dedicated to the devill commonly called the Gudeman's Fold."⁴

On the farms of Belscamphie and Brogan in Slains pieces of land separated by a ditch from the rest of the farm were known as the Goodman's land or Goodman's Fauld, and in 1649 the tenant was severely reprimanded by the church, and ordered to labour the land.⁵ Two parishes in the Presbytery of Fordyce also provide evidence of such dedication, and the visitation of Boyndie in 1649 brought to light a piece of ground unlaboured called "the halie man's ley dedicated to superstitious uses."⁶ In the following year a small piece of land near Nether Buckie was reserved and "man used to cast faills⁷ and deavets on it." This too was ordered to be tilled.⁸ In 1602 some men from Clachmarras in the parish of Elgin were brought before the Sessions to give a reason "quhy they reserved a peise of land to the devill callit the Gudmanis." A year later an elder reported a tenant for labouring "a piece land to the gudeman (devill) for the noltis cause."⁹

One of the charges against Andro Man of Aberdeen, who was convicted of witchcraft in 1597, was: "Thow hes mett and messurit dyvers peces of land callit wardis, to the hynd knight quhom thow confessis to be a spreit, and

¹ S. Stuart, *Presbytery Book of Strathbogie*, Aberdeen, 1843, p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9.

³ J. M. McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁴ J. Davidson, *Inverurie and the Earldom of the Garioch*, Edinburgh, 1878, pp. 308, 311.

⁵ J. B. Pratt, *Buchan*, Aberdeen, 1858, p. 452.

⁶ W. Crammond, *The Church and Churchyard of Boyndie*, Banff, 1866, p. 12.

⁷ Faill, large and thick turf used for roofing, or when mixed with dung as manure.—*Scottish National Dictionary*.

⁸ W. Crammond, *The Church and Churchyard of Rathven*, Banff, 1885, p. 20.

⁹ W. Crammond, *The Records of Elgin*, Aberdeen, 1903-7, II, p. 105.

puttis four stanis in the four nokis of the ward, and charmes the samen, and theirby haillis and guidis, and preservis thame fra the lunsaucht, and all vther diseasis, and thou forbiddis to cast fail or divett thereon, or put plewis therein; and this thow did in the Manis of Innes."¹

At Killiesmont, in the parish of Keith, there was a croft which measured about two hundred yards by twelve. The farmer, James Scott, resolved to bring it under cultivation, but the moment the plough touched the soil one of the oxen fell dead, killed by a fairy dart, or as the folk put it, the animal was "shot a dead." A century later Robert Watt decided to cultivate the dreaded plot. Three women, Maggie Barber, Jane Turner, and Janet McConnachie, sat by and watched the foolhardy farmer, expecting any moment to see him shot by the fatal bolt. But nothing untoward occurred.² Early in the nineteenth century there was a "deevil's faulie" or "black faulie" of about four acres on a farm near Huntly. The farmer decided "that the deil had lang eneuch o't and he wad hae a turn o't neist." He took his turn, cultivated it, and no evil befell him.³ A field on the farm of Dullarg, in the parish of Parton, lay unploughed until late in the nineteenth century. There was a local saying, "The man that ploughed the ley would never cut the crop." Eventually a farmer, Peter McCutcheon, ploughed the field and sowed it. He died before the crop was reaped.⁴ In Corgarff, two such plots, one on the side of Tornashaltic (Fire-hillock), and the other on Tornahaish (Cheese-Hillock), were sprinkled yearly with milk on the first day of April. This libation was to keep "the evil one out of the hoose, the milk-hoose, the byre, an' the barn."⁵ Finally from Edinburgh comes what is probably the last record of laying off a croft. According to Sir James Simpson, writing in 1861, a relative of his had bought a farm within twenty miles of Edinburgh not many years before. Amongst his first acts was the enclosure of a small triangular corner with a stone wall. This was the Goodman's croft, an offering to the devil that he might abstain from blighting or damaging the rest of the farm.⁶

So much for examples. The most interesting is unquestionably the Forgue

¹ *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, Aberdeen, 1841, I, p. 120.

² W. Gregor, *Trans. Banff Field Club*, Banff, 1884, p. 97. This account is authenticated in a letter communicated by Mr Henry Simpson, Aberdeen, and dated 2 June 1943, who stated that his father was born on the farm in question and that his uncle was well aware of the situation of "The Gudeman's Craft" within its borders. He never buried any dead cattle within the confines of the croft, for had he done so, other beasts were certain to die.—L. Spence, *The Fairy Tradition in Britain*, London, 1948, p. 328.

³ J. M. McPherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-7.

⁴ *Ethnological Survey of the United Kingdom*, London, 1897, Report No. 5, pp. 494-5.

⁵ *British Calendar Customs, Scotland*, London, 1939, II, p. 196.

⁶ E. B. Simpson, *Folk Lore in Lowland Scotland*, London, 1908, p. 27.

case, for here we obtain evidence of the reason for, and the ritual employed in, dedicating a corner of a field. Disease had overtaken the cattle on a farm, many were dying, and the reason was unknown. Therefore it must come from some supernatural source, an unseen evil spirit whose rights had been violated or neglected. By way of propitiation a portion of good land was dedicated to him, and the ritual of dedication was probably as follows. The farmer went to the field, and repeating some words, probably in the form of a degenerate prayer, promised the land should lie uncultivated. In token of this promise he cast stones in over the dyke of the fold, thereby indicating that he renounced his right to the land.

There would appear to have been two kinds of dedicated croft. There was the croft known from time immemorial as sacrosanct to the spirit of the Goodman or the Halyman, as in the case of the Killiesmont rig, at one end of which there was found, among a heap of stones, a rude cist containing ashes, and scattered around many loose irregular stones bearing marks of fire. A similar croft was found on the farm of Strathairy of King-Edward.¹ These are obviously remains of some ancient religious place of worship where sacrifice was offered and blessing was invoked upon the cattle and produce of the fields. Sir Walter Scott was very near to the point when he suggested that these crofts correspond to the *Temenos* of the pagan temples: a piece of ground kept apart from common uses and dedicated to the god.² The other type was one which was dedicated to the same spirit when new ground came under tillage, as we have shown in the Edinburgh example. In all such dedication the intention was evil in the eyes of the church, and the custom became so general, and the fields dedicated so numerous, that the church resolved to apply to Parliament for an act to deal with the owners of these unlaboured fields. The act, the terms of which are given in the opening paragraph, does not seem to have been granted, but the church embarked on a crusade to have the crofts broken up and an end made of this superstitious usage. The crusade, however, appears to have had very little effect.

In Scotland numerous patches of ground were formerly regarded either as the dwelling-place of the fairies or of the dead, and were considered sacred to these spirits. To cultivate this ground or permit livestock to damage or pollute it in any way was to ensure their vengeance. There are many examples to illustrate this belief. Murrain among beasts—the fifth of the dreaded plagues of Egypt in the day of Moses—befell the cattle of a farmer in Caithness who interfered with a fairy plot, and so serious was the plague that the

¹ *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1793, xi, p. 408.

² W. Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, London, 1884, p. 78.

need-fire¹ had to be employed to stay it.² Many attempts were made to build the first castle of Glamis on the hill of Denom in that neighbourhood because it was associated with traditions of the fairy race, and its foundations were nightly overthrown by the outraged fairies.³ Substantially the same tale is told of the castle of Melgund in the parish of Aberlemno.⁴ Sir Walter Scott tells us that a certain Mary Campbell of Aberdeen was abducted by the fairies, but was restored to her husband on the understanding that the ground in the neighbourhood of the fairy demesne remained untilld.⁵ Fairy arrows (neolithic flints) were discharged at those who endeavoured to cultivate such patches, as was shown in the Killiesmont tale; and to remain on these plots after sunset was to risk abduction by the devil.

Furthermore the association of fairies with the soil, and the sacrosanct nature of the fairy soil, indicates clearly the terrene or chthonic character of the ancestral fairy spirit. It was firmly believed by the Highlanders of Scotland that the souls of their predecessors dwelt in fairy hills, and according to Kirk, in his *Secret Commonwealth*, "A Mount was dedicate beside every churchyard, to receive the Souls till their adjacent Bodies arise, and so became as a Fairie-Hill."⁶ At Burrafield in Unst there was a piece of ground known as the Field of the Dead. The ground was uncultivated and the tradition was that no one must put spade in it or misfortune would certainly befall him. Once a woman dared, and dug up a portion. Shortly afterwards her best cow died. Nothing daunted, she delved again and actually sowed corn on the spot. "Then her husband died, and after that she left the rig alone."⁷ Throughout the Scottish witchcraft records there are numerous instances to prove the association of fairyland with the pre-Christian Hades or home of the dead. Alison Peirson of Byrehill, who was convicted and burnt in 1588 for the crime of witchcraft, paid several visits to Fairyland where she met Maitland of Lethington;⁸ Bessie Dunlop of Dalry, in 1576,

¹ Need fire, Gaelic *teine eiginn*, "churned" or "forced" fire was made on the outbreak of cattle plague, and as a charm against murrain. The fire was produced by the friction of two pieces of wood. In Mull, for example, it was kindled by "turning an oaken wheel over nine oaken spindles from east to west."—G. Henderson, *Survivals in Belief among the Celts*, Glasgow, 1911, p. 213. The cattle were then driven over the fire, in the belief that the purifying action of the smoke would purge the disease. In some cases, in immediate connection with the need fire, cattle have been known, even as late as the nineteenth century, to be sacrificed. See *Folk Lore*, London, 1891, II, p. 300; 1899, X, pp. 101, 353; Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

² A. A. MacGregor, *The Peat Fire Flame*, Edinburgh, 1947, p. 2.

³ J. C. Guthrie, *The Vale of Strathmore*, Edinburgh, 1875, p. 33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁵ W. Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders*, Edinburgh, 1932, II, p. 329.

⁶ R. Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies*, London, 1893, p. 23.

⁷ J. M. McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

⁸ R. Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1833, I, p. 161.

obtained her salves from a "fairy man," Thomas Reid, who was slain several years before at Pinkie Battle (1547), and in her confession claimed to have seen him walking along the High Street in Edinburgh.¹ Dalyell reports that the Orkney witch, Catherine Jonesdokter, "saw the Trowis ryse out of the kirkyard of Hildiswick, and Haliecross kirk of Eschenes and on the hill called Greinfall."² Somewhat similar to this is the tale of Adam Donald, the prophet of Bethelnie who used regularly to visit the churchyard and hold converse with the departed spirits, from whom he gained much hidden knowledge.³

As a tailpiece one example of the superstition known as "lowsin a gaun plough" may be cited. A tenant of Honey-nook, New Deer, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, was evicted from his farm. In revenge, he drove his twelve-ox plough, with all the earth it would carry, off the farm, and unyoked it on the neighbouring farm of West Affleck on a part called the "Goodman's Faul."⁴ In this way he took away the luck from the farm and transferred it to the "Goodman."

¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 49.

² J. C. Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, Glasgow, 1835, p. 533.

³ W. Alexander, *Northern Rural Life*, Edinburgh, 1888, p. 193.

⁴ J. Milne, *Myths and Superstitions of Buchan District*, Aberdeen, 1881, p. 31.

NOTES AND COMMENTS (continued from page 19)

one that is unlikely to be repeated. One could not but be impressed by the interest and anticipation that the whole occasion aroused. The sense of drama was heightened by the glare of the floodlights of several television companies and the continual discharge of photographers' flashbulbs. If the ghosts of all the lords of the twenty-two manors had been lingering in Holborn on that November afternoon they could hardly have restrained a smile at the nature of the last rites which the progressive society of the twentieth century was according to the Honour of Beaumont.

MUSEUM OF ENGLISH RURAL LIFE

The Reading University Museum of English Rural Life will be opened to the public at a ceremony to be held on the 27th of April 1955. Four years after it was founded it is at last possible for some of the collections to be

displayed. From 27 April onwards the times of opening will be as follows:

1 May—31 October. Tuesday—Saturday, 10.30—5.00; Sunday, 2.30—5.00.

1 November—30 April. Wednesday and Saturday only, 2.30—5.00.

SUMMER SCHOOL IN LOCAL HISTORY

The University College of Leicester held a Summer School in English Local History at Beaumont Hall, Leicester, from August 4th to 14th, 1954. Some two dozen history teachers, archivists, and research students attended. Two concurrent courses were offered, one on the history of the English town, the other, conducted by Dr Thirsk, on the agrarian history of England from the Roman period to the present day. The school was much appreciated by all who took part in it.

A Reconsideration of Some Former Husbandry Practices

By ERIC KERRIDGE

THE purpose of this article is to reconsider certain points of former husbandry practice, namely, ridge and furrow, and boundary balks, and to continue the discussion of them which was originated respectively by Mr M. W. Beresford and by Dr and Mrs C. S. Orwin.

I

In a series of articles¹ Mr Beresford sought to prove "that the single strip of the medieval fields is represented exactly by the ridge and furrow of the modern English landscape."² Against this I ventured to argue that "Ridge and furrow was not always for arable cultivation; when for arable, not always for cereal crops; when for cereal crops, not always for permanent cultivation; when for permanent cultivation, not always for continuous tillage; when for continuous tillage, not always for open field tillage; when for open field tillage, not always for common field husbandry." I also entered a plea that agricultural history should be studied primarily not by archaeological but by historical method.³

No one could be more acutely aware than I am of the many imperfections embodied in my article, some of which arose from the necessary, but not always well-considered, compression of the original paper, and others from insufficient attention to detail. Nevertheless, I learn from a charitable source that the argument and conclusions of my article were favoured with a certain measure of acceptance, tempered by a feeling that I had not dealt sufficiently with the particular instances that Mr Beresford adduced in support of his argument. Of this it will here suffice to say that his argument can now be checked by comparison with other studies. Dr Mead has shown cartographically that surviving ridge and furrow in Buckinghamshire coincided with the cold soils and was absent from warm soils, and he concludes: "The only indisputable fact is that all ridge and furrow land has at some time been

¹ M. W. Beresford, 'Ridge and Furrow and the Open Fields', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., I, 1948; 'Maps and the Medieval Landscape', *Antiquity*, xxiv, 1950; 'Glebe Terriers and Open Field Leicestershire', in *Studies in Leicestershire Agrarian History*, Leicester, 1949, p. 98.

² 'Maps and the Medieval Landscape', p. 115.

³ 'Ridge and Furrow and Agrarian History', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., IV, 1951.

under the plough."¹ This is agreeable with my remark that "All that the evidence of ridge and furrow proves by itself is that the land was at one time thrown into ridge and furrow."²

Between the publication of Mr Beresford's articles and mine, Mrs Chapman, studying open fields in Cheshire, discovered that ridge and furrow showed most strongly in the cold soils, where open field was least to be found, and was "absent on sandy soils, just where the strongest survivals of open field were to be found" in the early modern period.³ This serves at least to show the impossibility of tracing the former extent of common fields from surviving ridge and furrow. Finally, there had already been some discussion that Mr Beresford and I both overlooked, for Mr Slack had long before argued that ridge and furrow was for surface-drainage and that the old system of ploughing, together with the S-bend, which he attributes to plough-twist, was sometimes continued in enclosures.⁴ There is, then, little doubt that the gathering up of high ridge and furrow was practised in both open and enclosed fields.

It might still be argued, however, that the extent of former open field in certain areas could be judged from the ridge and furrow antecedent to hedgerows. To Mr Beresford it appeared that the weakest link in my argument was the bald assertion that "it would take more than 'a glance at any air-photograph' showing ridge and furrow 'sailing blithely' under hedges to prove former continuity."⁵ Most people would agree, I believe, that it is not always easy to decide if the ridge and furrow seen in aerial photographs was originally continuous or not, but my remark seems also to have been taken to apply with equal force to ground observation, as indeed it does. Mr Beresford, clinging to the kernel of his original argument to help him in his task of finding lost villages, said that I appeared to "overestimate the ability or knowledge of the ploughmen of the last two centuries to etch an open-field pattern between and through the modern hedges."⁶

But ever: where ridge and furrow was set up for the sake of surface-drainage, this surface-draining could not often have been confined to ridge and furrow, for in that case the surface water would only have been taken from the centre to drown the margins. Where water-furrows are used today

¹ W. R. Mead, 'Ridge and Furrow in Buckinghamshire', *Geog. Jnl.*, cxx, 1954, pp. 37, 41-2.

² *Art. cit.*, p. 32.

³ V. Chapman, 'Open Fields in West Cheshire', *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Cheshire*, civ, 1953, pp. 58-9.

⁴ W. J. Slack, 'The Open Field System of Agriculture', *Trans. Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club*, x, 1938, pp. 147 ff.

⁵ 'Ridge and Furrow and Agrarian History', p. 14, n.5.

⁶ *The Lost Villages of England*, London, 1954, p. 53.

for surface-drainage, the water is usually carried from the furrows and over the headland by means of gutters, and is often also drawn off to the side of the field by means of cross-gutters. Former practice in enclosed fields was hardly different, though perhaps superior in execution.¹ It is therefore not surprising to find that the common-field cultivators also engaged in guttering, cross-guttering, and trenching.² Orders for guttering, gripping, and trenching in common fields are frequent.³ It is agreed, for instance, "that every man shall drayne his arrable lande where neede is as deepe as the furrowes," in the wheat field by Martinmas and in the other fields by Christmas,⁴ that lands in the common field be trenched two days after sowing,⁵ that every man shall gripe his Land where any water crosses over it, his neighbour having done his" and given one day's warning,⁶ and that every man is to let the water from his grounds in the field before 11 November and to keep the outfalls clear throughout the year.⁷ Sometimes the occupiers of common-field land had to trench their portions where the jury of the manor decided.⁸ Sometimes orders are made for the ditching and trenching of lands' ends

¹ H. Holland, *General View of the Agriculture of Cheshire*, London, 1808, p. 128.

² W. Marshall, *A Review of the Reports to the Board of Agriculture from the Eastern Department of England*, York, 1811, p. 237; J. Middleton, *View of the Agriculture of Middlesex*, London, 1798, p. 140; C. Vancouver, *General View of the Agriculture in the County of Cambridge*, London, 1794, p. 108.

³ E.g., T. L. Tancred, "Three Seventeenth Century Court Rolls of the Manor of Aldborough", *Yorks. Arch. Jnl.*, xxxv, 1943, pp. 205, 212; M. W. Barley, 'East Yorks. Manorial Bye-Laws', *ibid.*, pp. 47-8; Birmingham Ref. Lib. MS. 168006; Berks RO (Rec. Off.) D/EPb/M3, Ct. Bk. (Court Book) Coleshill, p. 66; Soms. RO, DD/MI, Acc. C.186, box 6, Ct. Bk. Queen Camel 1600-11; Ct. R. (Roll) Queen Camel 25 Oct. 1692; Northants RO, Daventry Coll. 540, Ct. R. Hellidon 16 Oct. 14 Chas. II; Cambs. RO, L.64, Ct. R. Foxton Bury, Wimbish & Chatteris 23 Mar. 4 Jas. I; 7 Dec. 1665; L.19/17, Ct. R. Haslingfield c. 1598; L.1/8, Ct. R. Bassingbourne Richmond 19 Apr. 7 Chas. I; PRO, DL (D. of Lanc.), Ct. R., bdle. 81, no. 1119, m. 20v.; BM, Egerton MS. 3002, ff. 58, 65; Add. MS. 36585, ff. 164, 304v.; Add. R. 9284; N. Riding RO, ZBQ, Ct. R. Husthwaite cum Carlton 20 Oct. 1 Chas. I; ZCF, Ct. Bk. Thirsk 1622-38, 14 Oct. 4 Chas. I; 8 Oct. 1630; 1739-90, entry 1741; Beds. RO, X.69/5-6; Middx. RO, Acc. 248/1a, Ct. R. Colkennington als. Kenton, 1678; 249/69, Ct. R. Ruislip 23 Oct. 18 Eliz.; 446/M102, Ct. R. Harmondsworth 6 Apr. 10 Chas. I; 2 Oct. 11 Chas. I; 5 Feb. 1639; Wm. Salt Lib. (WSL), Ct. R. Madeley Holme 6 Apr. 1652; Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust Lib. (SOA), Hood Coll., Ct. R. Stivichall 23 Oct. 1710; Manorial Docs., Ct. Bk. Alveston and Tiddington 23 Oct. 7 Jas. I; 22 Oct. 8 Jas. I; Ct. R. 11 Apr. 18 Chas. II.

⁴ Northants RO, Westmorland Coll., box 5, parcel v, no. 1, Ct. R. Stanground 17 Sept. 19 Jas. I; 13 Sept. 20 Jas. I.

⁵ PRO, Exch., Q.R, Sp. Comm. 5553, 2nd file, m. 1; Northants RO, Westmorland Coll., box 5, parcel v, no. 5, Ct. R. Farcet 25 Oct. 1660; SOA, Throckmorton Coll., Ct. R. Oversley 19 Oct. 1654.

⁶ Cambs. RO, L.1/112, Ct. R. Long Stanton 3 Oct. 1654.

⁷ Northants RO, Westmorland Coll., box 5, parcel v, no. 1, Ct. R. Farcet 15 Sept. 13 Jas. I.

⁸ R. W. Jefferey, 'The Manors and Advowson of Great Rollright', *Oxfords. Rec. Soc. Trans.*, ix, 1927, p. 24; BM, Add. MS. 36585, f. 164.

and headlands.¹ Often gutters and drains were made by individuals, while the trenching was a public service.² Thus at Caxton it is ordered that all the land sown is to be water-furrowed and that every man is to "cross furrow by drawing theire plowes over theire respective lands soone after they are sowne soe as the Hayward may make the water trenches accordingly."³ Sometimes again both guttering and trenching were a public service provided on payment of a rate assessed by the yardland.⁴ That gutters crossed over headlands is not to be doubted. Fitzherbert advises the husbandman to "se that no water stande at the landes endes butting on the hedde landes, and yf it so do, than with a plough cast a forow toward the hedlandes and than the water wyll folowe that forow and make the landes drye."⁵ Laurence says that drains must be made to carry away the water, if need be by opening a trench across the headland.⁶ Similar remarks by Worlidge and Tull I have already cited elsewhere.⁷ Sometimes the orders made in manorial courts are more general, but they often allude specifically to the guttering of headlands.⁸ A defendant is accused of guttering his headland to the damage of his neighbour's meadow.⁹ Many grasslands, both in common and in severalty, were similarly furrow-drained.¹⁰ Gripping could be effected simply with a trenching

¹ *Yorks. Deeds* (vol. I, ed. W. Brown, *Yorks. Arch. Soc. Rec. Ser.* xxxix, 1909), 149; Northants RO, Higham Ferrers Burgess R. field orders 1696-1725; Cambs. RO, L.64, Ct. R. Foxton etc. 16 Sept. 42 Eliz.

² PRO, Ct. R., Gen. Ser., bdle. 207, no. 42, Ct. R. Leamington and Lillington, 18 Jan. 38 H. VIII; Northants RO, Montagu Coll., Misc. Ledger 145, Luddington 13 Oct. 1713; Westmorland Coll., box 5, parcel v, no. 1, Ct. R. Woodnewton 15 Sept. 18 Jas. I.

³ Cambs. RO, L.88/4, Ct. Files Whitsun 1659 presentments.

⁴ Berks RO, D/EPb/M3, p. 66; Northants RO, XYZ. Coll. 988, Ct. R. Greatworth 12 Jan. 4 Chas. I; Aynho Ct. R. 20 Oct. 1 Jas. II.

⁵ *The Boke of Surveyinge and Imptouementes*, London, 1534, f. 44.

⁶ J. Laurence, *A New System of Agriculture*, London, 1726, p. 62.

⁷ 'Ridge and Furrow and Agrarian History', p. 21.

⁸ WSL, Ct. R. Shentone 20 Oct. 6 Chas. I; Northants. RO, Montagu Coll., Misc. Ledger 129, Luddington 12 Oct. 1728; box 1378, box 25, no. 51, Ct. R. Luddington 23 Apr. 15 Eliz.

⁹ Wm. Salt Arch. Soc., *Coll. for a Hist. of Staffs.*, new ser., 1910, p. 70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 1926, pp. 67-8; W. Marshall, *Minutes on Agriculture in the Southern Counties*, London, 2 vols. 1799, I, p. 82; G. Atwell, *The Faithfull Surveyour*, Cambridge, 1662, p. 89; *The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths*, ed. J. Harland, Chetham Soc. xxxv, xli, xliii, xlvi, 1856-8, xxv, p. 114; PRO, Exch. Q.R., Sp. Comm. 5553, 2nd file, m. 1; BM, Add. MS. 36904, ff. 33, 74; 36908, ff. 12v., 36, 55; Glos RO, D.247, Ct. R. Longborough, no. 36; Wilts RO, Hobhouse Papers, Class A, bdle. 25, no. 5 (FL); Cambs. RO, L.1/112, Ct. R. Long Stanton 3 Oct. 1654; SOA, Throckmorton Coll., Ct. R. Coughton 1 Nov. 1708; Man. Docs., Ct. R. Adlestrop 24 Apr. 1762; Stoneleigh 6 Oct. 1692; Northants RO, Montagu Coll., box 1336, box 7, no. 66/2, verdict 13 Apr. 34 H. VIII; box 1352, box 18, no. 160, Ct. R. Barnwell 9 Dec. 5 Chas. I; Westmorland Coll., box 5, parcel v, no. 1, Ct. R. Farcet 13 Sept. 21 Jas. I; XYZ. Coll. 988, Ct. R. Greatworth 12 Jan. 4 Chas. I; WSL, Chetwynd MSS., file N, Ct. R. Churcheaton 4 Oct. 24 Eliz.

spade or hand trenching plough, of which there were several wheeled and unwheeled types, and these were well within the reach of most cultivators' purses.¹ Often the guttering and draining of common fields was done with a public or common draining plough frequently called the town plough, provided by a rate levied for the purpose and drawn by a great team of eight or nine yoke of oxen led by one or two pairs of horses or by a team of a score or so horses. While the labourers followed with shovels and trenching spades to perfect the work, the husbandmen drove the team to which they had contributed and the boys rode on the guide horses at the front.² To drain their fields and pastures in the stiff, miry clays, the common-field farmers of Caxton used a trenching plough, provided and maintained at the public charge with a mouldboard three times the usual length, two coulter to cut the sides, and a flat share to cut the bottom of a trench drain that was one foot wide at the base and eighteen inches at the top, with a depth of about one foot.³ At Naseby the town plough had likewise two coulters and cut a drain one foot deep and wide, throwing out the earth in a great ridge-like slice. This plough was drawn by a composite team of only ten or twelve horses.⁴

Guttering continued the water-furrow to the very limit of furlong and field. The drains had to be as deep as the water-furrows and to continue in much the same direction. All headlands did not need to be guttered, but where the field or furlong sloped there had to be gutters at the lower end, and where it was more or less flat or sloped in both directions, guttering could hardly have been avoided at either end. To distinguish this guttering and trenching from elevated ridge and furrow, either by aerial photograph or by ground observation, is never easy and sometimes virtually impossible. Consequently, it is virtually impossible to isolate the ridge and furrow that was aboriginally continuous and only later cut across by hedges.

Moreover, the legibility of what has been well called the erased, smeared,

¹ W. Blith, *The English Improver Improved*, London, 1652, opp. p. 69; J. O. Halliwell (ed.) *Ancient Inventories* . . ., London, 1854, p. 40.

² Blith, *op. cit.*, p. 28; Atwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-9; W. G. D. Fletcher, *Hist. of Loughborough*, Loughborough, 1887, p. 46; J. Mortimer, *The Whole Art of Husbandry*, London, 1707, p. 41; PRO, DL, Ct. R., bdle. 106, no. 1535, mm. 5-6; Cambs. RO, L.1/112, Ct. R. Long Stanton 3 Oct. 1654; Beds. RO, HA. 5/1, f. 22v.; Northants RO, Montagu Coll., Misc. Ledger 129, Caldecot 20 Oct. 1721; box 1352, box 18, no. 160, Ct. R. Barnwell 1 Dec. 1614; 9 Dec. 5 Chas. I; box 28, no. 28, Ct. R. Caldecot 11 Dec. 5 Chas. I; Westmorland Coll., box 5, parcel v, no. 1, Ct. R. Stanground 3 Sept. 7 Jas. I; 16 Sept. 22 Jas. I; Woodston 16 Sept. 12 Jas. I; 12 Sept. 21 Jas. I; 16 Sept. 22 Jas. I; Farcet 25 Oct. 1660. Cf. W. G. Hoskins, *Essays in Leics. Hist.*, Liverpool, 1950, p. 149.

³ Mortimer, *loc. cit.*; Cambs. RO, L.88/4, Ct. Files Caxton, presentments Whitsun 1659; 4 Oct. 1666.

⁴ J. Mastin, *Hist. and Antiquities of Naseby*, Cambridge, 1792, p. 18. Cf. Hoskins, *loc. cit.*

and over-written parchment of the landscape¹ is still further decreased by other husbandry practices, such as that of digging up the headlands and casting their mould on the fields to enrich the soil.² Furthermore, the enclosed fields were usually, as now, grouped and divided into shifts for the purpose of field courses, and while sometimes several fields fell into one shift, sometimes two or more shifts shared the same field.³ In laying down to grass "pastures" that had been "corned", Blith advises that water-furrows be made to run into a master trench, perhaps spaded out, and that the "pasture" be cast into several furlongs if necessitated by the exigencies of surface-drainage.⁴ This created in the midst of an enclosed field all the appearance of the juncture of open-field furlongs. A similar visual effect also resulted, as now, from the throwing of several closes into one.⁵ Therefore even when ridge and furrow changes direction in an enclosed field, and even when there is a headland in the middle of a close, this, by itself, is a long way from proof that common rights were exercised there at any time.

Clearly the aboriginal pattern of open fields cannot be read from present-day ridge and furrow with anything like the facility or certainty that has sometimes been supposed; and it was to this fact I made a passing allusion. The allusion, however, was made in passing precisely because it did not constitute a step in my argument, which was designed to stand without it. The weakest point of the argument was also its most crucial step, namely, the assertion that the division of fields was not confined to the division of common fields into enclosures in severalty. I pointed out that the subdivision of enclosures was a practice not infrequently obtaining in the nineteenth century.⁶ I offered no support for this crucial link because I had no evidence at my elbow to adduce, and still have none, so that if the proposition is not taken

¹ Slack, *art. cit.*, p. 142.

² J. Norden, *The Surveiors Dialogue*, London, 1618, p. 228; BM, Harl. MS. 5827, f. 7(5)v.; Northants RO, Montagu Coll., Misc. Ledger 145, p. 184.

³ E.g., *Coll. Hist. Staffs.* ix, 1906, pp. 198-9; new ser. 1912, pp. 23-4; BM, Harl. MS. 3749, ff. 13-14; Essex RO, D/DP.E25, f. 59v.; Herts RO, Gorhambury Coll., xi. 2; Moulton Coll. 46325; Leics. RO, Linden Hall MS. 93; Museum MS. 32, D.31/2; PRO, Chanc. Proc. ser. 1, Jas. I, bdle. Y.1, no. 25; Exch., Land Rev. (LR), Misc. Bks. (MB), vol. 185, f. 32; 210, f. 40; 228, ff. 149 (1) ff.; Augmentation Off. (AO), MB, vol. 380, ff. 13, 18; 419, f. 53; Plty Survs. (PS) (Warks.) no. 4; no. 12, ff. 5-6, 19, 21, 30, 32; no. 16, ff. 1 ff.; no. 17, ff. 1 ff.; no. 20, ff. 4-5, 8, 10; no. 21, ff. 1 ff.; no. 22, ff. 1 ff.; no. 32, ff. 7-9, 12-14, 17, 21, 26; (Worcs.) no. 4, ff. 3-4, 6, 11-12, 15, 22, 27; no. 6, ff. 3-4, 8, 10-11, 16, 22.

⁴ Blith, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁵ E.g., W. Marshall, *Rural Econ. Norfolk*, London, 2 vols. 1787, 1, p. 130; BM, Add. MS. 34162, f. 40 (p. 181); Northants RO, Montagu Coll., box 1322, Beaulieu particular 1832, pp. 29, 121.

⁶ 'Ridge and Furrow and Agrarian History', p. 35.

as self-evident, then it need not be followed. Nevertheless, that the subdivision of enclosures was frequently carried out in the Midland Plain and elsewhere in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, is attested by a considerable volume of unimpeachable evidence drawn from contemporary surveys and similar sources, so that this step of my argument does not lack support.¹ To prove that a field has been divided does not prove that a common field has been divided into enclosures, as the reader may see for himself by studying the plan of ridge and furrow in Soulbury made by Dr Mead. Here he will see that there is a certain coincidence between the pattern of ridge and furrow and the furlongs of the former common fields, from which he may draw the comforting conclusion that the lie of the land has not yet at least been materially altered; but he will also see, in the former enclosures, some apparent examples of closes being cast into furlongs and of changes in the direction of ploughing in 'pastures'. None of this could, of course, be deduced from ground observation or without the assistance of an old map, from which the extent of former common field may be determined precisely without recourse to the hazards of archaeological method.²

For all the reasons advanced previously and above, it is impossible to prove the former existence of common fields merely from ground observation, far less from the reading of aerial photographs, and it would therefore appear that Mr Beresford is incorrect in clinging to the kernel of his former argument.

II

Some early writers, notably Seebohm and Slater,³ asserted that the dispersed and intermingled holdings in common fields were bounded by balks

¹ *The Parliamentary Survey of the Lands and Possessions of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester*, ed. T. Cave and R. A. Wilson, Worcs. Hist. Soc., 1924, pp. 60, 129, 160; *The Survey of the Manor of Rochdale 1626*, ed. H. Fishwick, Chetham Soc. new ser. LXXI, 1913, pp. 38-40, 42, 74; E. M. Hartshorne, *Memorials of Holdenby*, London, 1868, pp. xxi-ii; WSL, D/1765/27; Staffs RO, Hatherton MSS., box 16, bdle. b, Penkridge Ct. of Surv. ff. 1 ff.; Oxfor. RO, J. vii. 2; Northants RO, Finch-Hatton Coll. 119. f. 20; 272, ff. 8, 24-6; 298, pp. 2, 6; Brudenell Coll. ASR. 562, p. 7; O.x.14; Soms. RO, DD/CN, Acc. C.168, box 2, no. 26, p. 95; DD/X/GB, Acc. W.9, Combe Surv. Bk. pp. 175, 228; Herts RO, Gorhambury Coll. xi. 11, f. 60; MB, Add. MS. 34683, f. 4v.; Add. Ch. 53392, mm. 7, 11-12, 15-18; PRO, Rentals and Survs. (RS), Gen. Ser. (GS), file 26, no. 166, f. 10; Exch. QR, Deps. by Comm. 15 Chas. I, East. 6, esp. m. 74; LR, MB, vol. 185, ff. 15 (14), 36, 100v., 102, 134 (34) v., 156 (50); 222, f. 21; AO, MB, vol. 419, f. 53; PS (Hunts) no. 3, f. 10; (Northants) no. 3; no. 20, f. 18; (Ruts.) no. 13, f. 1; (Warks.) no. 10, f. 5; no. 15, no. 16, f. 7; no. 17, ff. 1 ff.; (Yorks.) no. 28, f. 14. Many other instances could be adduced.

² Mead, *art. cit.*, pp. 40-1.

³ F. Seebohm, *The Engl. Village Community*, London, 1883, p. 3; G. Slater, *The Engl. Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields*, London, 1907, p. 63.

of greensward. This was sharply contradicted by Dr and Mrs Orwin. The document Seebohm referred to was found to mention only a few balks. Where sward balks did occur they were only temporary and confined to the fallow year.¹ Dr Orwin could not accept Seebohm's view because "to an agriculturalist this seemed so highly improbable." Moreover, there were no signs of boundary balks in surviving ridge and furrow, which was assumed to be largely that ploughed in former common fields. To clinch the matter, "the Laxton farmers laughed at the bare suggestion."² From this time boundary balks of greensward became regarded as one of the common errors in history and the invention of prejudiced ignorance.³ Nevertheless, Mr Drew found evidence of boundary balks in the common fields of the Isle of Portland and inferred their use in other warm-soiled common fields.⁴ Mr Finberg pointed to the boundary balks of Braunton and of other places in Devon,⁵ I myself to those of the Chalk Country. Mr Drew and I, confronted with apparently conflicting evidence from different farming regions, tried to reconcile these conflicts by suggesting that where the land was gathered into elevated ridge and furrow, Dr and Mrs Orwin were correct in banishing boundary balks from the common fields, but that where the land was ploughed flat, the parcels lying dispersedly in the fields were bounded by grass balks.⁶ This compromise, however, proved unacceptable to Dr and Mrs Orwin. To every example of boundary balks produced, they responded with the 'theory of exceptions', that is, everything in disagreement with their argument was assumed to be an exception to prove the rule, even when the 'exceptions' outnumbered the 'normal'. Owing partly perhaps to the improvident contraction of one of my footnotes, Dr and Mrs Orwin brushed aside my arguments, declaring that I did not understand the distinction between water-furrows and open-furrows and had failed to realize that even when the land was ploughed flat, it was usually by the ridge-and-furrow method.⁷

One piece of evidence still remained to be disposed of, namely, the lynchets

¹ C. S. and C. S. Orwin, *The Open Fields*, Oxford, 1938, pp. 46-7.

² C. S. Orwin, 'Observations on the Open Fields', *Econ. Hist. Rev.* VIII, 1938, pp. 128-9.

³ R. F. Treharne, *Common Errors in History*, Hist. Assoc. 1947, p. 6, cited in C. D. Drew, 'Open Arable Fields at Portland and elsewhere', *Antiquity*, XXII, 1948. See also A. L. Poole, *From Domesday to Magna Carta*, Oxford, 1951, p. 50, n.1.

⁴ Drew, *art. cit.*, pp. 79-81.

⁵ H. P. R. Finberg, 'The Open Field in Devonshire', *Antiquity*, XXIII, 1949, pp. 180, 182; W. G. Hoskins and H. P. R. Finberg, *Devonshire Studies*, London, 1952, pp. 266, 276-8. See also J. A. Venn, *The Foundations of Agricultural Economics*, Cambridge, 1923, p. 14.

⁶ Drew, *loc. cit.*; Kerridge, *art. cit.*, p. 19.

⁷ *The Open Fields*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1954, pp. 46 ff.

on the slopes of certain hilly regions. Individual archaeologists and the Congress of Archaeological Societies came to the conclusion that these terrace lynchets were associated with and caused by cultivation in open fields, the grassy balks or lynchets serving as brakes against the soil-creep caused by one-way downhill ploughing. This conclusion is, however, unacceptable to Dr and Mrs Orwin. They say it is topographically inconceivable that the terraces should have been associated with open-field cultivation. First, there is very little soil or subsoil there. Secondly, the theory of the archaeologists depends on the unwarranted assumption that the parcels in open fields were divided by balks. Moreover, no land-hunger can be imagined that would have driven people to cultivate these slopes, even if their ploughs had been able to cultivate them, which they were not. Dr and Mrs Orwin also bring forward archaeological evidence to the effect that the solid nature of the chalk rock in one place made any theory of ploughing incredible, for the terraces could only have been formed with pick and shovel. They are willing to concede that the terraces were man-made, but not that they were connected with cultivation, still less with open-field cultivation and boundary balks.¹ Boundary balks were therefore nowhere used in the common fields, not even in the hill countries.

The recent discovery of the Piltdown hoax shows that archaeological methods have greatly improved, but it nevertheless emphasizes their fundamental weaknesses and the great difficulty that historians labour under in assessing archaeological evidence. Suffice it to say, therefore, that the dissident archaeological report cited by Dr and Mrs Orwin contented itself with declaring that the purpose of the terracing must be left an open question. Dr and Mrs Orwin have therefore no archaeological justification for closing it.² Those who think that the terraces must, some of them, have been excavated with pick and shovel perhaps underestimate the ability of the plough, for hill roads were sometimes formed simply by ploughing the land level.³ In any event the suggestion is certainly not new. Seebohm suggested that some of the terraces were artificially cut.⁴ So did Cobbett, as I had already shown.⁵ The most comprehensive discussion of linchet terracing is contained in the passage quoted from Marshall by Dr and Mrs Orwin. "The ARTIFICIAL SURFACE which meets the eye," he says, "in different parts of these hills, forcibly arrests the attention. It occurs on the steeper slopes; which are formed into stages, or platforms, with grassy steeps, provincially 'LYNCHETS', between them. This form of surface must have been produced, at great expence, in the first instance, or by great length of time, in constantly turning

¹ *The Open Fields*, pp. 177-9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³ Atwell, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁴ Seebohm, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵ 'Ridge and Furrow and Agrarian History', p. 23.

the furrows, downward of the slope. But as the turnwrest plough has never, perhaps, had a footing, on this division of the Chalk Hills, it is probable, that the stages under notice were formed, by hand; at some period, when manual labour, either through an excess of population, or through the means of feudal services, was easily obtained. And the advantages, arising from the operation, have no doubt repaid the first cost, with ample interest. The stages, or platforms, are equally commodious for implements of tillage, as for carriages; beside retaining moisture, better than sloping surfaces; while the grassy steeps, between the arable stages, afford no inconsiderable supply of herbage; on which horses are teddered, or tended, while corn is in the ground; and which gives pasturage to sheep at other seasons. This sort of artificial surface is common, in different parts of the Island; and the antiquary might be less profitably employed, than in tracing its origin."¹

Whether or not the terraces and steeps were cut or resulted from cultivation—and the two explanations are reconcilable—does not matter for this discussion. What is clear is that Marshall was not simply mystified by the linchets. Although he thought their origin should be investigated, he was perfectly clear that the terraces were tilled for corn and that they were divided by grassy balks. Marshall's accuracy as an observer of English husbandry means that further evidence of the cultivation of terraces is not needed. But if it were needed, plenty could be adduced. Cobbett saw hundreds of acres in the down countries ploughed in shelves, where the side of the steep hill had been made into stairs. The horizontal parts were generally ploughed and sown.² Jethro Tull also makes clear reference to terraced cultivation.³ The rising parts, as already pointed out, were called *linchets*, *linchards*, *balks*, or *walls*.⁴ That the common field upon the 'walls' at Amesbury in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was such terraced cultivation can hardly be doubted.⁵ At Kensworth there were "iij rodas iacentes super lez lynches super Stokynghill."⁶ At Clothall some of the linchet terraces were cultivated until recently.⁷ Similar terracing is to be found on the sides of some of the hills in northern England and is well described in Dr Raistrick's book on Malham.⁸ We can believe Mr Douch when he tells us that "the transformation of the balk into a linchet where the

¹ *Rural Econ. of the Southern Counties*, London, 2 vols. 1798, II, pp. 301-2.

² *Rural Rides*, Everyman, II, p. 81.

³ *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*, London, 1762, pp. 242-5, 253.

⁴ Kerridge, *art. cit.* p. 23.

⁵ *Devizes Mus.*, Lib. Super. maneriorum de Amisburie etc., f. 25v.; Amesbury Surv. Bk. 1574; Surv. of Amesbury 1635, ff. 43-4, 55-7, 59.

⁶ H. L. Gray, *Engl. Field Systems*, Harvard Hist. Studies, XXII, Camb., Mass. 1915, p. 377, n.4.

⁷ Venn, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁸ A. Raistrick, *Malham and Malham Moor*, Clapham via Lancaster, 1947, pp. 54-5, 68.

soil is turned downhill" can be seen at the Isle of Portland, and that "the theory that some linchets, at least, are intimately connected with Open-Field agriculture is thus proved."¹

It might be argued that the hillside terraces should be excluded from consideration in discussing the question of boundary balks because of their exceptional character. But the truth is that Laxton, on the study of which *The Open Fields* is based, is every whit as exceptional as the Isle of Portland. Nor are the authors justified in suggesting that quarrying differs from other rural industries in its effect on boundary balks. The balks of the Isle of Portland cannot be so easily dismissed, while to exclude the slopes of the hill countries from consideration is to exclude a large part of England. Moreover, the 'landsherd's' of Braunton Great Field and of many other places in Devon are not exceptional. Dr and Mrs Orwin attribute large parcels in open fields solely to consolidation, because their theory of the origin of open fields demands this; but even if the large parcels were the result of consolidation, this consolidation, as we shall see, would have lessened the number of boundary balks, not increased it. Therefore the 'landsherd's', another variant of the provincial name for boundary balks, may be taken in evidence. Formerly, I contented myself with observing that the terms *linch*, *linchet*, *linchard*, *landshere*, *mere*, *balk*, and *wall* all had, in the Chalk Country, the same general meaning of boundary balks in common fields, this being the meaning attached to some of them by John Worlidge.² Since, however, Dr and Mrs Orwin regard this evidence as insufficient and since my previous footnote was too contracted, I venture to give below the references appended to the original draft of that article,³ some of which may be worth further comment. At Elcombe in 1655 there were twelve acres of linchards.⁴ A glebe terrier of Norton Bavent clearly describes many parcels linched on either side.⁵ A survey of Alvediston shows sixteen and a half acres dispersed in the common field and bounded on every side by "lanchards."⁶ There is thus sufficient evidence of boundary balks in the Chalk Country.

At first sight it is not easy to see why Dr and Mrs Orwin should have laboured under the misapprehension that I did not know the distinction between a water-furrow proper and an open-furrow, for I defined this

¹ R. Douch, 'Customs and Traditions of the Isle of Portland', *Antiquity*, XXIII, 1949, p. 152.

² *Art. cit.*, pp. 19, 23.

³ *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manorial Rolls belonging to Sir H. F. Burke*, Manorial Soc. Pubs. XII, 1923, Pt. 2, p. 22; PRO, Ct. R., GS, bdle. 209, no. 19, Mere Hallmote 16 Apr. 9 Eliz.; Wilton MSS., Ct. Bk. Various Parishes 1633-4, f. 36v.; Ct. Bk. Bemerton and Quidhampton 1595-1639, 15 Apr. 16 Jas.

⁴ Devizes Mus., Deed Room Wr./lb, f. 65.

⁵ R. C. Hoare, *Hist. of Mod. Wilts.*, London 1822-43, Hundred of Warminster, pp. 81-2.

⁶ Wilton MSS., Survs. of Manors 1632-3, Surv. of Alvediston, f. 3.

precisely in my article.¹ Nor did I fail to realize that warm soils were usually ploughed by the ridge-and-furrow method even when not gathered into highbacks. If my use of the word 'land' did not signify this awareness, then a glance at my edition of the Wilton surveys would have dispelled any doubts on that score.² My original draft contained an even fuller explanation of the various methods of ploughing, later jettisoned only from exigencies of space.³ Moreover, my use of the term 'ridge and furrow' in its narrower sense of highbacks is justified not only by common sense and usage but also by precedent.⁴ It is certainly odd that Dr and Mrs Orwin should object so persistently to the presence of boundary balks in the common fields. The only possible explanation of this would seem to be that they regard the balks as incompatible with their theory of the origin of open fields. Against that theory, Professor Postan urged some powerful objections.⁵ However, it is only by finding and weighing the admissible evidence that the issue can be decided one way or the other.

Let us reconsider the suggestion already advanced, that is, that there were boundary balks in the common fields on warm, dry soils but not on cold, wet soils, in the chalk-down countries but not in the Midland Plain. On further examination it becomes clear that this position of compromise is untenable, and that both Mr Drew and myself were mistaken in giving credence to the conclusions of Dr and Mrs Orwin even within the limits of the Midlands. There were in fact boundary balks in the common fields here as elsewhere, and I was wrong to agree that "ridge and furrow bears out the erasure of balks." In Northamptonshire, "Most of the Lordships" had "Lays of Greensod which are left betwixt the Furlongs, and in several Places betwixt each of the Lands. . ."⁶ Near Market Deeping the arable common fields were ploughed up into broad arched lands, but furrows three, four, or five yards wide were laid to grass and mown for hay.⁷ In Buckinghamshire the open-field ridges were two feet high and the sheep commoned on the balks between them.⁸ The green furrows of Warwickshire were similar⁹ and can-

¹ *Art. cit.*, p. 17. See also pp. 19, 22.

² *Surv. of the Manors of Philip First Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery*, Wilts. Arch. Soc. Rec. Brch. ix, 1953, s.v. ridges.

³ For advice on this I am indebted to Professor R. H. Tawney.

⁴ J. Morton, *Natural Hist. of Northants.*, London, 1712, p. 340; R. Plot, *Nat. Hist. of Staffs.*, Oxford, 1688, p. 55; *The Book of Husbandry*, ed. W. W. Skeat, Engl. Dialect Soc., 1882, p. 132; Kerridge, *art. cit.*, p. 24; Marshall, *Rural Econ. Norfolk*, I, p. 147; Blith, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁵ M. M. Postan in *Econ. Hist. Rev.* ix, 1939, pp. 194-5.

⁶ Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁷ Marshall, *Eastern Dept.*, p. 135.

⁸ St J. Priest, *Gen. View of the Agric. of Buckinghamshire*, London, 1813, p. 131.

⁹ Kerridge, *art. cit.*, pp. 20, 24.

not be regarded as exceptional. References to greensward balks dividing and bounding the properties and occupations lying dispersedly in the common fields of the plain countries are superabundant. Sometimes the grass boundary balks are distinguished from the ridgeways and slades by the designation 'narrow' or 'foot', alluding to their width. Frequently the balks, green meres, or green furrows are described as lying between neighbour and neighbour. In some townships these balks were one foot wide, in some eighteen inches, in some two feet, in some three or four. Sometimes they were wider between acres than between roods.¹

Whether these boundary balks were an essential part of common fields is a point that cannot yet be determined, but there can be no doubt that they were highly advantageous to common-field husbandry as practised in the early modern period. The balks were not made solely as boundaries but partly to be used as meadow and pasture, to which the wet furrows and ridge flanks were well suited. Nevertheless to divide the dispersed lands and parcels was one of the main objects of boundary balks. For this reason an occupier of contiguous lands might plough up the greensward balks between them, but not those on their two outsides.² Thus when a land had been a middle land, it did not have to be balked on each side, but after it was exchanged and became an end land, it had to be balked on the one side to provide a boundary between neighbour and neighbour.³ Dr and Mrs Orwin make the unsupported assertion that the boundary balks they treated as exceptional

¹ Tancred, *art. cit.*, p. 202; F. S. Colman, *A Hist. of Barwick-in-Elmet*, Thoresby Soc., xvii, 1908, p. 127; BM, Add. MS. 36875, f. 25; 36908, ff. 8, 15v.; Add. R. 54166; PRO, DL, RS, bdle. 8, no. 6a, p. 3; Ct. R., bdle. 82, no. 1133, m. 29; bdle. 106, no. 1534, m. 6; 1535, mm. 1, 5-6; Ct. R., GS, bdle. 207, no. 42, Lillington 5 Apr. 2 Ed. VI; Exch., Q.R., Deps. by Comm., 26 Eliz., Trin. 8; Chanc. Proc. ser. 1, Jas. I, bdle. S.29, no. 7, m. 1; Leics. RO, Linden Hall MS. 343; SOA, Man. Docs., Ct. R. Alveston and Tiddington 21 Oct. 9 Jas. I, 11 Apr. 18 Chas. II; Ct. R. Whitchurch 12 Oct. 1711; Willoughby de Broke Coll. 703a, Extracts Ct. R. Barford 30 Sept. 1 Jas. I; 1194, Ct. R. 6 Apr. 11 Chas. I; 1393a, Ct. Bk. Sowe 6 Apr. 8 Geo. I; Throckmorton Coll., Ct. R. Throckmorton 13 Oct. 1725; Ct. Bk. Stoneleigh, p. 23; Leigh Coll., Ct. R. Ratley 20 Oct. 1602; Trevelyan Coll., Ct. R. Snitterfield 20 Oct. 1660; Northants RO, Montagu Coll., Misc. Ledger 129, Weekley 12 Oct. 1721, Polebroke 7 Oct. 1727, Luddington 12 Oct. 1728; 145, pp. 71, 157-8, 469, 503; box 1352, box 26, no. 28, Ct. R. Caldecote 11 Dec. 5 Chas. I; box 1346, box 20, no. 32, m. 16; box 1336, box 7, no. 72, Ct. Bk. Weekley 4 Oct. 1707; no. 66/10 Ct. R. 12 Oct. 1721; box 1342, box P, pt. 2, Ct. Files Dondon in Quainton 10 Sept. 1700, field orders; Daventry Coll. 533, Hellidon orders 20 Oct. 29 Chas. II; 20 Oct. 36 Chas. II; 540, Hellidon orders 16 Oct. 14 Chas. II; 573a, Ravensthorpe agreement 1721; Isham of Lamport Coll. 128, Ct. R. Lamport 30 Apr. 18 Eliz.; Cambs. RO, L.64, Ct. R. Foxton Bury etc. 7 Dec. 1665; Warks. RO, MR. 14, copy Ct. R. Leamington Hastings 25 Aug. 1630; MR. 16/9; WSL, Ct. R. Shenstone 12 Oct. 18 Chas. I.

² Slater, *op. cit.*, p. 331; Northants RO, Aynho Ct. R. 9 Apr. 1680.

³ PRO, Exch. Q.R., Deps. by Comm. 26 Eliz., Trin. 8, dep. by Wm. Harrowden.

were also merely temporary and left unploughed only during fallowing.¹ There is, however, abundant evidence that it was forbidden by customary law to plough up the boundary balks during any year of the field-course, especially and specifically where the lands were not middle but end lands and the balks were boundaries between neighbour and neighbour.²

The general use of boundary balks in the lands dispersed in common fields in the early modern period is therefore established beyond doubt. Dr and Mrs Orwin have denied their existence; but they are to be found at all hands, at least in the early modern period, and the onus of disproof lies upon those who would deny their existence in the common fields of earlier times. Confronted with a few instances of balks in common fields, Dr and Mrs Orwin argued that these instances were exceptional and that the boundary balks themselves were produced by the consolidation of dispersed parcels. Since, however, it was often permitted to plough out the balks between middle lands but not usually those between neighbour and neighbour, it is clear that the consolidation of dispersed parcels into fewer and larger units of occupation and ownership would not increase but decrease the number of boundary balks.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assert that all common fields everywhere and at all times had boundary balks. Although the presence of such balks, as a general rule, may be taken to be established, there are some instances of common fields, especially in comparatively modern times, which had none.³ Laxton is a case in point. Here, however, there remains only a truncated remnant and almost empty shell of common-field husbandry, and it would be dangerous to argue far from such exceptional survival. How

¹ *The Open Fields*, 1954, pp. 46-7.

² E.g., Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 127; PRO, DL, Ct. R., bdle. 106, no. 1534, m. 6; BM, Add. MS. 36908 f. 3v.; Add. R. 44654, Ct. R. Whitchurch 7 May 1740; Warks. RO, MR. 14 as in n.1, p. 38; MR. 16/9; Worcs. RO, Acc. 54, Ct. R. Kempsey 31 Mar. 1656; Leics. RO, box 311, Leire arts. of agreement 1689; WSL, Ct. R. Shenstone 1 May 9 Chas. I; Beds. RO, DD/TW 10/2/9, Ct. R. Clapham 14 Apr. 8 Chas. I; BS. 1276, Ct. R. Tempsford 1617; L.26/563, Ct. R. Harrold 2 May 9 Chas. I; Northants RO, Westmorland Coll., box 7, no. 71, Yarwell presentmt. bk., f. 5; Finch-Hatton Coll. 834, Gretton bye-laws 24 Oct. 1695; 991, Ct. R. Weldon Magna 1728; Ecton Coll. 20, Ct. R. 9 Oct. 1713; 7a, Ct. R. 1 May 1701; 9, Ct. R. 14 Oct. 1743; Daventry Coll. 532, Hellidon orders 13 Nov. 1714; 533, do. 20 Oct. 29 Chas. II; 573c, Ravensthorpe agreement 1760; Montagu Coll., Misc. Ledger 145, pp. 236, 451; box 1342, box P, Pt. 2, Ct. Files Dondon in Quainton 10 Sept. 1700; box 1352, box 18, no. 160, Barnwell orders 1 Dec. 1614; Higham Ferrers Burgess R. 1696-1725 field orders, 23 Apr. 1719; SOA, Man. Docs., Ct. Files Whitchurch, pains and orders, 24 Apr. 1588, 12 Oct. 1711; Ct. Bk. Stoneleigh, p. 23; Ct. R. Alveston and Tiddington 11 Apr. 18 Chas. II; Ct. Bk. 20 Apr. 2 Jas. I; Willoughby de Broke Coll. 1393a, Ct. Bk. Sowe 6 Apr. 8 Geo. I; Hood Coll., Ct. R. Stivichall 3 Oct. 1724.

³ Slater, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Venn, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

some common fields lost their boundary balks in modern times can be seen from the example of Wendon. When the common field here was consolidated and redistributed, the balks, so far from being newly laid down, were ploughed up and replaced by clover crops.¹ From about the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries clover and turnip crops were widely introduced into the field-courses employed in common fields, and in the plain countries in particular the introduction of clover and 'seeds' greatly reduced the incidence of bare fallows in many common fields. Often the resultant change in field-courses was accompanied by consolidation and redistribution. For these and other similar reasons the few surviving remnants of common fields shed only a dim light upon former common-field husbandry.

Boundary balks, like ridge and furrow, are amongst the *minutiae* of former husbandry practice, and no purpose would be served in expatiating on them unless the opportunity were taken to draw the general conclusion that the common fields are best studied from the records that their husbandry produced, namely, the pains and penalties, the orders and agreements recorded in the rolls and books of proceedings in courts baron, and that to take one township and generalize from it for the whole of England is an undertaking fraught with hidden dangers.

¹ W. James and J. Malcolm, *Gen. View of the Agric. of the Co. of Buckingham*, London, 1794, p. 29.

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ENGLAND AND THE SALT TRADE IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

by A. R. Bridbury

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Book Reviews

H. C. DARBY and I. B. TERRETT (eds.), *The Domesday Geography of Midland England*. Cambridge University Press, 1954. xvi + 482 pp. 55s.

The second volume of *The Domesday Geography of England* covers a group of nine midland counties (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire), which in 1086 were already very different from each other in physical features, social structure, and historical development. The uniformity of procedure of the Domesday commissioners tended to disguise regional peculiarities, but the comparative methods used by Professor Darby and his team of geographers bring out these contrasts as far as it is possible. Since this work must be primarily one of reference, the editor has rightly caused the author of each county chapter to repeat the analysis of the data under the various headings dictated by the form of the return: hidage assessment, plough-teams, population, woodland, meadow, and so on.

The most interesting general conclusions, as the editor shows in his final chapter, concern the way in which population and wealth are distributed in the region. The south-eastern portion stands out as the most populous and productive (judged mainly by the evidence of plough-team density). In particular the Vale of Evesham and the Avon valley below Warwick appear even in 1086 to have been exceptionally prosperous areas. But it is interesting to note too that while there is often a correlation between high population and high plough-team density, this is not invariable. East and central Herefordshire, with a lower population density than central Leicestershire, appear to have had a higher plough-team density. This should warn us against assuming that a high population density in an area indicates general prosperity. In such areas there might be many peasant families without plough-teams or with only very small shares in teams.

A consideration of this problem suggests that more might have been said, under the heading 'Prosperity and Population', about economic conditions in the different counties. We cannot know from Domesday Book what was the average equipment, in plough-teams, of the different classes of peasants. But we can calculate the ratio, on a village or manor basis, between peasants and plough-teams, disregarding classes. Since we do know what were the numbers in each village of sokemen, villeins, and bordars, it could be seen how the ratio of peasants to ploughs varied according to variations in village social structure. Another factor which should be taken into account when considering the relation between population and plough-team density is the proportion between the number of demesne and peasant plough-teams. Where there was a higher than average plough-team density and a normal or lower than average population density, this might be explained by the existence of extensive, well-equipped demesnes.

These points raise again the question of the boundary between historical geography and social and economic history. This is probably a question that will never be solved, except temporarily, and for special purposes. We must, however, continue to discuss it. In the work under review, the scope of the geographer seems to have been defined too widely in some respects and not widely enough in others. The discussion of taxation assessments, that is, of 'hidage', is a traditional and highly respectable element in Domesday studies, much pursued by legal and constitutional historians. In view of the admitted artificiality of Domesday hidage, at any rate in relation to agrarian reality, it seems that elaborations on this theme could be considerably shortened in a geographical survey. Similarly, the discussion of 'ploughlands' as distinct from 'plough-teams' could well be less elaborate than, for instance, in the Leicestershire chapter, for the editor himself

tells us that "we cannot use (these figures) in any attempt at reconstructing the economic geography of the Domesday Midlands." Are not the problems of the social distribution of plough-team wealth, as posed above, more relevant to the task of the geographer than the minutiae of the incidence of taxation?

Any reader of this book who has an interest in Domesday problems is bound to have his own views as to what could have been more fully treated. Perhaps the waste villages of Staffordshire could have been analysed with Mr T. A. M. Bishop's treatment of the Yorkshire waste villages in mind. Perhaps the important discussion of the Droitwich salt industry and its ramifications would have benefited from attention to Mr Houghton's work on the midland salt ways. One has the impression that the contributors have had to conform to rather a rigid framework, and that this has prevented them from deviating along paths that might have been irrelevant, but might also have been fruitful.

However, whatever has been left out, there is a good deal in. The production of the book is magnificent. The 159 maps are finely done. There are useful lists and tables summarizing the Domesday data at the end of the book. And each chapter provides very important lists of village entries illustrating various points. To find these for oneself in the mass of Domesday data is no simple task. These things will make the book an indispensable handbook, not only for the Domesday scholar, but for all English local and regional historians.

R. H. HILTON

W. G. HOSKINS and R. A. MCKINLEY (eds.), *The Victoria History of the County of Leicester*, Vol. II. Geoffrey Cumberlege, O.U.P. 270 pp. 63s.

Leicestershire is one of the first beneficiaries from the *V. C. H.*'s new emphasis on agrarian history, and in all respects the volume is of more than local interest. The quality of the 125 pages here devoted to agrarian history will be found to rest on three other gifts of Fortune: the first, the arrival of a stranger from Devonshire who has repaid his adopted

county manifold in model papers, and now with the general editorship of this volume. The second happy chance is a long tradition of writing of high quality, from Burton's *Description* (1622), through Nichols's *History* (1795-1815) to the papers which for a century the *Transactions* of the Archaeological Society have housed; rarely can scholars have had the satisfaction of seeing their small and various contributions brought to a synthesis so soon. County volumes of this quality do not grow on trees, and there are counties—alas—where even the appointment of Dr Hoskins would not produce a *V. C. H.* in a decade: where few have sown, reaping is a slow business. The third piece of good fortune is that in the authors of the two agrarian sections the *V. C. H.* was able to profit by skills already sharpened in other service. Dr Hilton had already studied many aspects of local medieval agriculture, and from this firm ground could the more easily pass to colonizing some of the untilled wastes which still abound. Dr Joan Thirsk had not previously written specifically of this county, but her intimacy with seventeenth-century sources put her in a unique position for bringing together the course of agrarian change between 1540 and 1760 into a continuous, reasoned, and balanced narrative. For the first time one can see these two centuries as a whole: too often the textbooks have had to slide hastily—for want of local monographs—from the agrarian troubles of 1607 to the beginning of parliamentary enclosure. Historians in other counties will be grateful.

The two authors' achievements both in original work and synthesis enable them to be frank about what still remains. To take one example, Dr Thirsk's figures of the 2,200 acres added to an arable acreage of 8,000 in forty parishes between 1793 and 1801 will whet appetites for a good local, quantitative, study of a ploughing-up campaign which must surely have left its mark in estate records if it were on this scale. It is also clear—reading between the lines—that local enclosure awards, tithe awards, and the working papers of the enclosure commissions are still unexhausted.

Leicestershire's agrarian history derives much of its interest from the terrain. Set, as one fifteenth-century writer put it, *in umbilico regni*, it has displayed variety and pliability. The existence of Charnwood and Leicester Forests kept it from a tame plough-going uniformity in the earlier Middle Ages, while its variety of uses made it the storm centre of agrarian politics in 1517, 1548, and 1607. It produced corn or grass with almost equal ease: "a great delight and profit either way," as Burton put it; a fickle jade who followed either of two masters at the jingle of a coin. The hunger for wool (1450-1550) extended its pastures, while the hunger for cattle in the next century preserved them even against renewed competition from a corn-hunger deriving from a rising and an urbanizing population. Thus here, even in the late seventeenth century when the lords were all but converted to the idea of general enclosure, the war against the progress of the hedged field flared up again in the Moore-Lee pamphlets. The fickle balance between corn and grass shows not only in the immunity of some open fields until parliamentary enclosure (detailed in App. I), but also in the long-drawn-out retreat of the open fields (detailed parish by parish in App. II). A fine, full-page plate (p. 159) shows the village of Kilby from the air: the houses and crofts of husbandmen who experienced the fortunes sketched in Dr Hilton's narrative; the plough-marks of their furlongs and strips in the fields beyond; and, set over their corrugations, the diverse shape of hedges created piecemeal by the enclosures from 1609 to 1771.

Other counties may regard this volume properly as a model. With an eye on the future, a few minor comments may be raised unquerulously. Dr Thirsk sees the geographical distribution of "early" and "late" enclosure as an "untidy pattern." She passes to students of soil and climate the task of detecting a neater logic than the accidents of ownership. Geographical determinism may be a good tool by which to separate chalk from cheese in Wiltshire, but it seems doubtful whether a county of more homogeneity such as Leices-

tershire would respond to a more particular examination. And as to climate, did not the Leicester rain fall equally on the just and the unjust landlord? the only difference, the song tells us, was that the unjust had the just's umbrella. Again, there are dangers that a reader will take too literally some of the figures and percentages in that part of Dr Thirsk's study which rests on Dr Hoskins's work in inventories and the 1524 tax-lists. These are samples, as the original examination made plain. But it is a far step from a sample to (p. 212) a statement that in 1588 peas took 45.9 per cent of the sown area.

It is also a pity that the unified editorship did not permit a brief note in the Religious Houses section (pp. 1-54) indicating to whom the principal possessions passed at the Dissolution, a matter highly relevant to agrarian history. Some overall figures (p. 210) suggest that Mr McKinley has in fact extracted the data for which we must now wait until the distant village-history volumes. Readers of this volume who have not possession of Vol. I (1907) are warned that a good atlas will be necessary to follow the earlier part of Dr Hilton's argument, but his Domesday pages may now be aligned with the maps in Mr Holly's chapter of the *Domesday Geography*, Vol. II (1954).

Two final matters, on which one would like to examine the authors *viva voce*, would make good examination questions anywhere. Dr Hilton speaks of medieval England as "under-populated" without a gloss on this relative term; and Dr Thirsk sums up the latter-day agrarian history of the county thus: "Since 1860 it has reproduced in brighter tones the picture of English agriculture as a whole." Does local variation from a national story end in 1860?

M. W. BERESFORD

OLIVE COOK and EDWIN SMITH, *English Cottages and Farmhouses*. Thames & Hudson, 1954. 53 pp. of text and 273 photographs. 42s.

One picks up a new book on cottages and farmhouses with some misgiving, especially

when it is lavishly illustrated, but for once the serious reader is not disappointed. Edwin Smith's photographs are superb and are brilliantly reproduced in photogravure, showing among other things the texture of the building materials in a way that makes them as valuable as the text. There is no cheating over the subject: no manor houses and country houses creep in to enhance the pictorial quality of the book. We are given genuine farmhouses, barns and sheds, granaries and cow-stalls—even a remarkable pig-sty from Coln St Aldwyn with a Roman colonnade taken from the remains of a nearby Roman villa—and a number of farmhouse interiors. There are also cottages of all dates and types, again with some delightful interiors. The photographs are not only beautiful but are valuable as records of English rural habitations, and English interior arrangements, in the mid-twentieth century. One can imagine some of these interiors, especially, being seized upon a hundred years hence to illustrate the domestic history of our time.

Miss Olive Cook contributes a careful introduction to the book, with particular emphasis on the building materials used in this vernacular architecture, and some scattered remarks on structure and plan. She rightly draws attention (p. 12) to the general wave of rebuilding among all classes but the poorest, beginning about 1570 and lasting until the outbreak of the Civil War. In the four most northerly counties this wave of rebuilding appears to have been delayed until the last generation of the seventeenth century. But she is in error when she attributes this remarkable revolution in English housing to a doubling of the population since 1500: there is not the slightest evidence for this belief. The true causes are much more interesting. They were the high level of money-savings among farmers of all degrees, accumulated as a result of two generations of rising prices and relatively fixed costs; and the growth of a desire for privacy of living which by the latter part of Elizabeth I's reign had percolated down to the yeomen and by the 1630's to all but the labouring class.

It is hardly true to suggest (p. 13) that the "plans of yeomen farmers' houses . . . defy classification." There are indeed many regional variations of plan, and few regions have yet been studied intensively from this standpoint; but we shall eventually be able to define, one feels confident, certain basic plans for these houses in the different regions, and perhaps to some extent for cottages also, though here there is naturally less scope for variety. We shall also discover how these plans evolved in subsequent generations down to the present day. The study of peasant building in England has hardly begun, though Miss Cook would have found the work of James Walton in Yorkshire, of M. W. Barley in the East Midlands, and of Sir Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan in Monmouthshire, very much to her purpose. As it is, she tells us very little about farmhouse plans, and no plans are drawn in the text.

One must be careful, too, to define the cottage type unequivocally. The beautiful example of a medieval "cottage" at Didbrook, Glos. (plate 5) was undoubtedly the house of a peasant-farmer originally, and a substantial peasant at that. Nor is it permissible to call the elaborate timbered fifteenth-century houses at Lavenham and Hildersham (plates 9 and 10) "cottages," as they are called in the introductory notes. This criticism applies to a number of other plates (e.g. nos. 1, 15, 16, 17, 21, 28, 38, and possibly one or two others). These houses may well be cottages today, but in origin they were unquestionably the houses of yeomen and husbandmen, and even perhaps of wealthy clothiers at Lavenham. It is, indeed, doubtful whether a genuine cottage (i.e. the house of a labouring family) survives in this country from a date anterior to about 1660. One does not know of a single certain example of this type, though it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a few—but only a very few—may yet be discovered by patient fieldwork. The reason for this is simple. The true cottages were built by the labourers' landlords, who were not disposed to spend more money than was absolutely necessary upon their housing. There were plenty of

jerry-builders in medieval England and later (as Mr Salzman has shown in his recent book *Building in England*) and they met the landlords' requirements for economy. Various records tell us that there was a great deal of cottage-building in Elizabethan England, and if all this has disappeared it is because it lasted at the most three or four or five generations and was being largely replaced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, from which time we find considerable numbers of true cottages standing in our villages.

Miss Cook's notes upon the photographs, these criticisms apart, are excellently done, full of sensibility for the buildings and their varied settings, whether in the Somerset marshes or among the Lakeland fells, or anywhere between; and they are precisely informative about building materials (her strong point) and constructional details. A black and white geological map of England and Wales is provided to guide the reader through unfamiliar territory. This is not entirely easy to read, but one can see that the printing problem was a difficult one. Another map shows the location of all the photographs in the book. One notices with personal regret that a great block of central England, comprising Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire, is not represented by a single photograph, and the large county of Lincolnshire by only one. Yet this region of England has a number of distinct types of farmhouse and cottage building, of which one need only cite the eighteenth-century framework-knitters' cottages with their long windows of tiny panes in the upper floors. But the subject of farmhouses and cottages is a vast one. With all the destruction that has taken place, England is still rich in this kind of agricultural record. The next step is surely a series of regional surveys by this admirable and knowledgeable partnership (assisted by some local advice here and there) getting down to closer detail, while still covering an area that is a unity in itself and is sufficiently large to encourage sales.

If one has been critical of certain aspects of

this book, it is because it makes a real contribution to our understanding of vernacular building in England and is therefore worthy of close attention. Readers of the AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW should not fail to study it, even if they cannot persuade a friend to make them a present of the book, for it may well stimulate them to do fieldwork in their own regions. Though so much is left to us, from every century since the fifteenth, much perishes every year or is altered beyond recognition as farmers become more opulent, and with this destruction and change some unique detail of farming history may well be lost for ever. If this book stimulates only fifty readers to go and do likewise (though Edwin Smith's photographs are admittedly discouraging by their very excellence) one would be delighted. Half a dozen of us cannot do much in so rich and difficult a field.

W. G. HOSKINS

MAURICE BERESFORD, *The Lost Villages of England*. Lutterworth Press, 1954. 446 pp. 45s.

Until this book appeared, the literature on deserted villages was limited to a few essays on single counties, all too localized in their scope to receive much publicity. Yet the subject offers the historian the golden opportunity of sharing with others his delight in fieldwork and fresh discovery. It is a pleasure, therefore, to welcome a book which is designed to bring the subject to the attention of a wider public. Mr Beresford has perceived the popular appeal of his subject, and has shaped his book to meet the needs of the general reader. He takes nothing for granted: the layout of the open-field village, for example, is explained simply and clearly. Nor does he assume at the outset that the subject will be of absorbing interest to his readers. To draw them on, he employs the devices of the novelist, whetting the appetite in the early chapters, and postponing satisfaction by a non-chronological treatment of his story for some 170 pages. Then, having enticed his readers into the fields to identify old, and perhaps even discover new, sites, he coaxes them

on still further into the libraries and record offices to seek out the documents that will supplement the evidence on the ground. A description of the principal sources of documentary information follows. Lay subsidy rolls, he says, are easily read, and we might have been persuaded had he chosen a less daunting example than the illustration on page 286. Altogether, this is a fascinating book, excellently illustrated, and written in a lively and colourful way. The personal descriptions of visits to deserted sites are particularly successful in conveying to the reader the author's sense of adventure in the field. Yet the student of the subject may justly feel aggrieved that his needs should have been sacrificed to the tastes of the general reader. The non-chronological treatment is exasperating if one wants to return to the book for reference. Even the author must have had doubts about an arrangement which constantly obliged him to warn the reader of matters discussed earlier or postponed till later in the book. And inevitably the book is full of repetition. John Hales's statement in the *Discourse of the Commonweal* that the worst enclosures occurred before the beginning of the reign of Henry VII is printed four times, twice briefly on pages 148 and 241 (where the quotations are inaccurate), and twice in a longer form on pages 120 and 149. The over-generous treatment accorded to certain topics, moreover, involves considerable sacrifice in the detail necessary to make this book a complete survey of present knowledge on deserted villages. Lists of known sites are printed county by county in an appendix. But the lists for Leicestershire, Yorkshire, and Warwickshire, dealt with by Dr Hoskins and Mr Beresford elsewhere, are represented by samples only. This means that the reader has to refer to other books and periodicals for the three lists which are the most complete and reliable of all.

To those who are already familiar with some of the sites of deserted villages, much the most interesting part of Mr Beresford's book is that in which he analyses the causes of their disappearance. The compass of the book,

it should be pointed out, is narrower than the title would suggest. The author has no more than a paragraph about villages swallowed up by the sea or consumed by fire. His main concern is with the villages which disappeared in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, and those mainly in the Inner Midlands, whence the loudest complaints of enclosure were heard in the Tudor period. Of the many entangled causes of depopulation, he makes a thoroughly balanced and fair appraisal. Depopulation did not happen overnight. It was usually a long drawn-out process to which it is impossible to assign one single cause. But most cases which Mr Beresford examines in detail had two common factors. The villages were already small, and the freeholders were few. The plagues of the fourteenth century weakened them further, but the immediate and most decisive cause of their decay was the superior profits of wool over corn. This was the hard economic fact, which held true until towards the end of the sixteenth century, and which dictated the policy of those ruthless manorial lords who enclosed their land for sheep. Not every farmer everywhere was lured by the golden fleece to change his husbandry. But in the counties of the Inner Midlands, on the claylands that were equally suited to corn and grass, the temptations were strongest. Here it was that the enclosure movement achieved the greatest destruction of villages.

There remains one further cause of depopulation about which there is little certain evidence, though much speculation. How many villages disappeared as a result of a retreat of settlement from marginal land taken into cultivation during the years of high farming in the thirteenth century? Discussion of this question and also of regional differences in land use is the weakest part of the book. This is not entirely Mr Beresford's fault. There are so few studies of regional farming to equip us with even the rudimentary information about land use and social structure before the eighteenth century that no one is in a position to argue effectively. Yet Mr Beresford is incautious. On what evidence, for example, does he base his state-

ment that in the marginal counties of the west and south (referring apparently to the Worcestershire to Somerset area) "the area under corn was initially small, but it does not seem to have contracted in the period 1450-1550" (p. 247). Lincolnshire is the victim of some broad and unhappy generalizations. Arthur Young's description of "the rich grazing lands . . . the glory of Lincolnshire" referred to the fenlands of Holland, not the convertible claylands of Lindsey and Kesteven. They are inappropriate as an example of land that was adaptable to both corn and grass. They were unfit for anything but pasture until after the drainage operations of the eighteenth century.

The same fenlands, cited on page 245 as an example of convertible land, are swept into a generalization on page 246, to the effect that the fen was so excellent for corn in the sixteenth century that there was no economic incentive to convert it to pasture. It is true that the fenland of Lincolnshire escaped the distress of enclosure, but this was not because the land was first-class arable, but because it was already mostly in grass. The villages avoided depopulation because the sites suitable for habitation in the fen were limited, and the villages though few were large. The parishes also were extensive, and it was not unusual to have as many as six manors in one parish. It would have been difficult to destroy a community of some seventy to a hundred families, in which no one manorial lord held sway, and where also the number of freeholders was high.

It is a mistake to attribute the depopulations at the southern end of the Lincolnshire wolds to the infertility of the soil (p. 202). Over most of the district the soil is a good loam or clay. Moreover, until the Parliamentary enclosures of the nineteenth century, most of the villages had valuable common rights in East, West, and Wildmore Fens. It was evidently attractive country in the early days of settlement, for it was among the most densely settled in all Lincolnshire by the time of Domesday, and it continued so in the sixteenth century. The depopulations which oc-

curred here seem to have been the result of over-population rather than under-population. There were too many villages for the amount of land.

Finally, some minor errors may be mentioned for correction in another edition. Sennington in Gloucestershire (p. 415) is a misnomer for Sevenhampton. Howardshoe wapentake is an old and unfamiliar form for Haverstoe wapentake in Lincolnshire (p. 171). The 583 cases of depopulation heard in the Exchequer are given a covering date of 1518-68 on p. 114, 1517-65 on p. 218, and 1518-65 on p. 115. The reader would like to know where Mr Beresford published the modern Ordnance map of Wotton Underwood, Bucks. (p. 333), and where, or if, all the excavations listed on p. 415 were reported in print.

JOAN THIRSK

C. S. and C. S. ORWIN, *The Open Fields*.

Second edition. Oxford University Press, 1954. xiv + 190 pp. 30s.

In preparing a new edition of this well-known work for press, the authors have made a laudable effort to secure economy of production and thus to keep the price down. One way of doing this would have been to omit Part I, the general discussion of open-field agriculture and its history, which to many critics has always appeared the weakest part of the book, and to leave Part II intact as a monograph on the interesting survival of open fields at Laxton. But this course has not commended itself to Dr and Mrs Orwin. Instead they have chosen to omit the Laxton Terrier, and to retain Part I with a certain amount of revision, taking account—but hardly sufficient account—of research carried out by other scholars since 1938.

A discussion of some of the points arising from the revision will be found elsewhere in this issue. Here it is only necessary to mention that the chapter on the former extent of the open fields is no longer illustrated by an inaccurate map and its text has been considerably modified. Even so, it is ambiguous to say that farming in open fields was practised "in

various parts" of Devon "where the topography permitted" (p. 65), for this obscures the fact that traces of such agriculture are found on steep hillsides and on the tops of downs, as well as on comparatively level sites.

The date of the report cited on p. 169 is surely 1952, not 1852. An article in *Antiquity* is quoted with the wrong date on p. 50 and with the correct one on p. 65. Dr J. D. Chambers is not a professor (pp. v, ix), and Miss Audrey Beecham may be a little surprised to find her name spelt Beauchamp (p. v).

H. P. R. FINBERG

REX WAILES, *The English Windmill*, with sixty-four drawings by Vincent Lines. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 246 pp. + 32 plates. 35s. Life in rural England would have been the duller if there had been no miller to bear the brunt of country humour. To the old question, "What is the most honest thing in the world?" the answer "A miller's shirt, for it clasps a thief by the throat daily" immediately establishes the miller's position in society. Mr Rex Wailes has much to say about millers good and bad. One of his most delightful stories is from the late sixteenth century; it relates how Long Meg of Westminster plagued "the sawcie Miller of Epping." With little provocation she put the miller in a sack and left him hanging in mid-air on the sack lift, "where the poore miller cried out for helpe, and if his wife had not been coming, himselfe had been almost kill'd and the Mill for want of corne set on fire." However much millers deserved their reputation, rustic humour, if humour it can be called, saw to it that they paid dearly for their sins.

Today few windmills (or water-mills for that matter) remain in use. It is only a few years since the landscape of at least the eastern part of England presented a very different sight from that which it presents today. Mr Wailes illustrates this vividly with a passage from Cobbett. "The windmills on the hills in the vicinage are so numerous that I counted, whilst standing in one place, no less than seventeen. They are all painted or washed white, the sails are black; it was a fair morn-

ing, the wind was brisk, and their twirling altogether added greatly to the beauty of the scene . . ." Even in more recent times, at any rate up to the early part of this century, the windmill was a common feature of the landscape, and it is a matter for universal regret that something which has for many centuries been a part of the English scene is in danger of disappearing completely.

Mr Wailes has produced an excellent book which, without indulging in over-much nostalgia, blends his unique knowledge of the mechanism of mills with lucid powers of description. In fact the main strength of the book lies in its very clear exposition of the construction and working of mills. With the aid of Mr Vincent Lines's excellent drawings the reader is able to gain a very clear impression of mills and their operation. The book sets out to provide something both for the expert and the merely interested. It has done this without either becoming too technical or writing down, and the result is very satisfying. Its weakness is perhaps its lack of historical background prior to about 1800. Mr Wailes has relied in the main on the wealth of material, both documentary and spoken, with which millwrights and others have provided him. It would have given a more balanced picture if there had been more historical detail and a little more definite attempt to relate the rise and fall of the windmill to the economic background.

There is one other minor point of criticism, and that is that the publishers might have fitted Mr Lines's excellent drawings more comfortably into the format; spreading in a sprawling fashion, as many of them do, over the edges of the type area, they give a clumsy appearance in a book which is otherwise very pleasingly produced. But these are small points in a book which is likely to remain a standard work of reference.

Mr Wailes makes a right and proper plea for the collection of more material about mills before it is too late. He is anxious, too, that sufficient examples of the various types shall be preserved. It is a pity that other things of utility which are passing from the twentieth-

century scene cannot in like manner find their chroniclers; one might mention the traction engine or the farm horse. But to Mr Wailes the windmill is clearly more than a thing of utility, it is also a thing of beauty. More is the pity that economic circumstances will not permit it to be a joy for ever.

J. W. Y. HIGGS

ADAM COLLIER, *The Crofting Problem*.
Cambridge University Press, 1954. 190 pp.
25s.

Given an area nearly half the land area of Scotland, containing one-twentieth of its inhabitants and one in ten of its arable acres with practically no coal or other workable mineral, and few industries, all sorts of problems are bound to arise. Add to that a romantic history, and the legacy of bitter remembrance of brutal clearances from the glens, and you have the Highland problem, which is seldom discussed without emotion and usually with passion. And although there are only seven constituencies in the Highlands and Islands, politicians help to distort the facts and darken counsel. Adam Collier's book is to be welcomed because, although the Highlands and Islands cast their spell over him, as over other city-bred lads, he made a serious effort to produce a comprehensive study before death cut him off untimely leaving an uncompleted manuscript, which has now been prepared for publication by Professor Cairncross.

The crofter problem is the toughest problem of the Highlands, and more particularly of the Islands. The recent report of the Crofting Commission (Cmd. 9091) declares that the crofting system, as now organized, "is fighting a losing battle against the social and economic forces of the day." Collier set out to explain how the crofting system came about, the efforts to keep it going by statutory and other means, and how it was faring before the last war when he made his survey. Professor Cairncross has edited and annotated Collier's work to take account of more recent changes. Collier found that on "many fundamental points it is difficult to speak with

any pretension to actual knowledge". There is no register of crofters, and we have no reliable means of measuring their output. We have only a general idea of what other sources of income are open to them, or what part these sources play in the standard of living. There are plenty of opinions, assertions, and contradictions, but a lack of reliable data. What there are Collier sifted and analysed objectively and where he had to rely on estimates, he tested them as far as that could be done. He gave enough of the history, geography, and topography of the area to show how the problems of administration and communication condition the social and economic life of the people. His chapter on natural limitations brings out the soil and climatic conditions which handicap cultivation. He makes a careful study of the depopulation of the area and relates it to the general depopulation of rural districts, and he discusses the standard of living of the crofter in comparison with that of the industrial worker. He concludes with a chapter in which he discusses what might be done to stem the rot. This is the weakest chapter of the book, for he was not equipped to evaluate projects of land use and agricultural development. But there he is in line with most advocates of Highland development. The value of his book is that it brings together the facts, as far as they can be ascertained, submits them to analysis, and sets them in relation to the general problems of the area; and it does so without any effort, or distortion, to make a case. It sets a new and much needed standard for the endless discussions of the Highlands and Islands.

J. F. DUNCAN

J. WENTWORTH DAY, *A History of the Fens*.
Harrap, 1954. 272 pp. 15s.

If one accepts Carlyle's definition of history as the biography of great men, and Mr Wentworth Day's implied inclusion of bibulous squires and fenland "sportsmen" in this class, then the author of this book may perhaps be allowed its title, *A History of the Fens*.

The genesis of this "history" was a sugges-

tion made to Mr Day at a shooting party at which "ambassadors and cabinet ministers" were among the guests, that he should write of the Fen as it was "in our great-granddad's time." He has, he says, tried to make it human, which intention has led him to avoid "tedious excursions into geology, botany, entomology, prehistory, ecclesiastical history, and drainage." (What, it may be asked, can then remain of fenland history?) True to his word, Mr Day dismisses prehistory in a few ingenuous paragraphs: the ancient Britons were the slaves who dug the Roman Banks, and the ancestors of some old Fen character "like enough came over with the raiding Jutes when the Vikings sailed . . . their galleys up the slow Fenland rivers." He then skips forward from several pages on Guthlac to a brief account of Vermuyden (whom he praises for draining some thousands of acres, while he damns the bureaucrats of the Second World War for draining a few hundreds). There is little or nothing here of the work of the Fenland Research Committee, of Miller on Ely or Page on Crowland or Thirsk on the sixteenth-century fen; and the name of Darby does not even appear in the bibliography.

Thereafter the quiddities of fenland lore—some of them new and many of them entertaining—are sandwiched between reminiscences of lethal bird-lovers. Mr Day quotes proudly the achievement of a friend who killed 68 green plover with three shots.

The agricultural history is largely contained in the four pages of the chapter on "Fen Farming of Old."

This book, Mr Day says in his preface, does not pretend to be a complete history of the fens. That seems a fair enough assessment of it.

R. TROW-SMITH

ARTHUR E. KIRKBY, *Humberstone . . . the Story of a Village*. A. E. Kirkby, 1953. 196 pp. 17s. 6d.

This village history is compiled from printed, manuscript, and oral sources by a geography teacher living in Humberstone, Lincolnshire. The author attributes his interest in local history to the youthful fascination which he felt for secret passages, monkish ghosts, and haunted churchyards. Fortunately, the book is made of more substantial stuff. It contains a good description of the village as it is today, an account of its geographical and geological situation, the history of the manor, the fields, the church, abbey, and school, and some notable families. But an opportunity has been missed of investigating the changes in the coastline in this parish. The author makes a brief reference to the marshland reclaimed in recent years, but fails to realize that this is part of a much older story that could be traced among the documents of the Public Record Office.

JOAN THIRSK

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